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THE PAGAN
AT
THE SHRINE



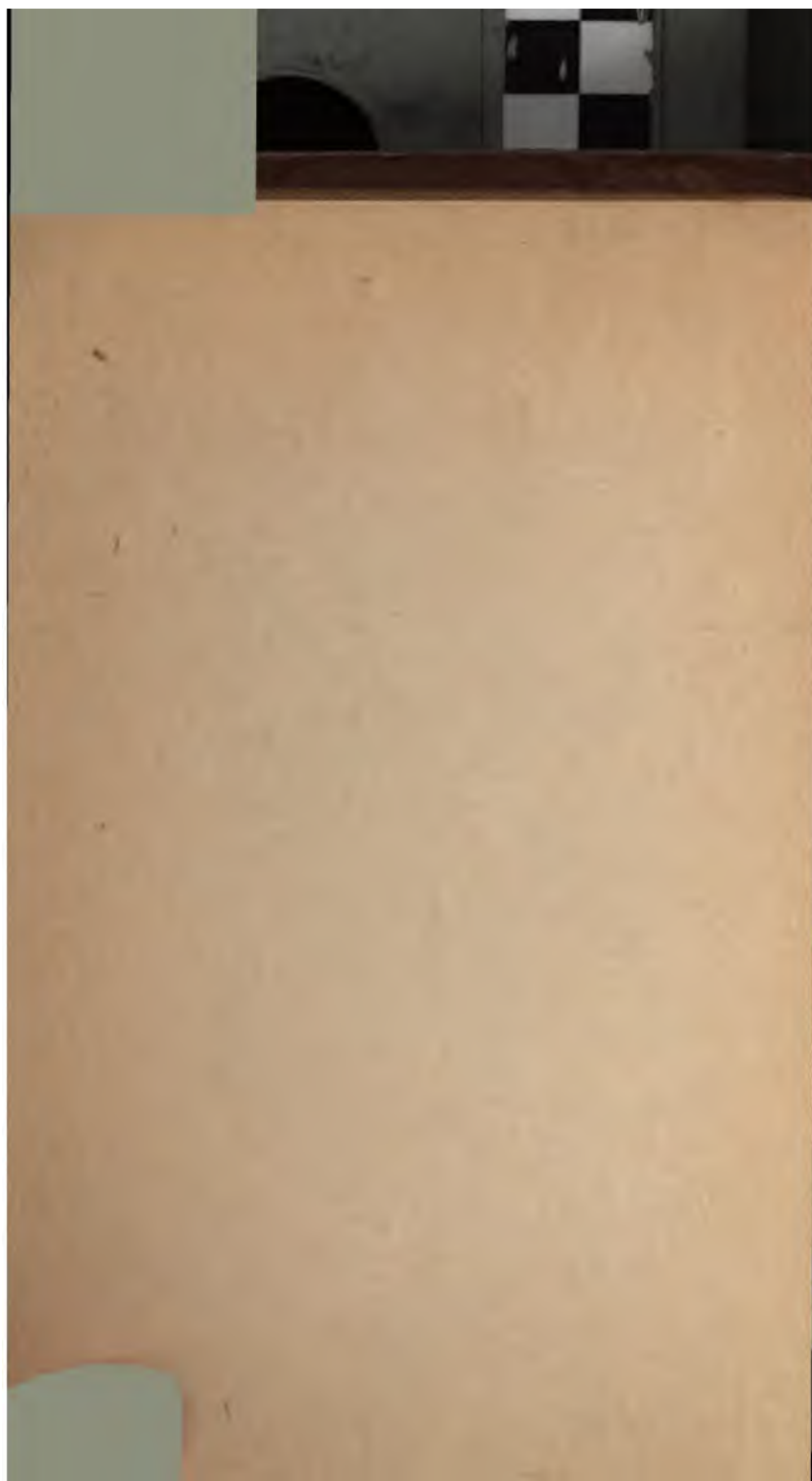
PAUL GWYNNE

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THE PAGAN AT THE SHRINE

MARTA

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE PAGAN AT THE SHRINE"

2nd Edition. Cr. 8vo. 6s.

The Saturday Review says : "It gives such a representation of Spanish life as we have never before met in fiction. The sympathy, the picturesqueness, the sincerity are remarkable. Many diverse types of Spanish character are described, but all repay acquaintance."

The Spectator says : "There is no denying the picturesqueness of the setting, the vividness of the portraiture, or the genuineness of the humour."

The Times says : "Mr. Paul Gwynne's *Marta* must be remembered with gratitude for the few hours' respite which it affords from this chilly climate among the vines and orange trees, the dust and glare of the South. This is the first novel we remember to have read which attempts to deal at once justly and sympathetically with Spanish life and character. The treatment of the country and the people is vivid, fresh, and sincere ; . . . When all is said our thoughts return with regret to the warm South that glows on every page ; and we can recommend the book to every one who is shivering through this English summer."

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THE PAGAN AT THE SHRINE

BY
PAUL GWYNNE

AUTHOR OF "MARTA"

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"But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters pale,
And love the high embowéd roof,
With antique pillars massy proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light :
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes."
Il Penseroso.





CHAPTER I

" Por ver á la Pilarica
Venimos de Cala Toráo
Venimos en la perrera
Jesús ¡ lo que hemos gastáo !"¹
Gigantes y Cabezudos.

SANTA FE is a city of some forty thousand souls in the South of Spain; it does many things in general to earn a living, but not much in particular. In the first place, as you may gather from its name, it is a most religious city and famed for its processions. It claims the sugar factories of the vega, it claims the fishing trade of Cinco Caminos, it claims the very good business in olive oil that passes through it to the sea, coming from Valamo. It claims, with greater justice, a trade in wine and raisins, it tins a few unwilling little fish that vainly expostulate, " But we're *not* sardines ! " it smokes a deal of tobacco, drinks a veritable ocean of coffee, has its own opinions, and trusts in Providence. The most conspicuous building is the bull ring, and the cathedral is a very good second.

¹ " To see Our Lady of the Pillar
Forth from our poor home we went,
Travelling in the dog's compartment.
God ! The money we have spent ! "
*Chorus of poor rustics—Holy Week in
Zaragoza.*

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To give some idea of the importance of this fane it may be recorded that the annual consumption of wax candles is nearly four thousand pounds by weight, and of oil very little less. The wine consumed at mass would reach, in one year, nearly a thousand gallons, and the incense burned, "*una barbaridad*"!

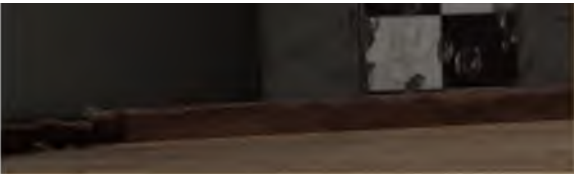
Outside the great porch the public letter-writer used to sit, and girls would come to him to have their letters read or to dictate a reply. Here would they stand, all giggling, whilst the old man's patience lasted, and then his wrinkled face and shining eye-glasses would come peering at them round the screen, and his quavering voice would protest, "Come, my lady, come! Are we going to write a letter to-day or not?"

And when they found that he was not laughing at them at all, but, on the contrary, very much in earnest, they would become serious also. Then the dictation would commence:—

"DEAR PEPE——"

And after much sucking of the forefinger and looking up at the cathedral tower for inspiration, the business always took precisely the same course. The fair one would lean her bare elbows on the little table, her cheeks upon her hands, and becoming confidential, would remark, "I want to tell him so-and-so and so-and-so, but I don't know how to put it." Whereupon the scribe would answer that the difficulty, "if dexterously encountered, was not insuperable," and after much scratching of the quill would read his effort aloud, generally with the warmest reception.

There were times, however, when the fair one was doubtful, and even a little reproachful as to the shades of meaning which the writer had failed to catch, and then the good man would tear up the paper, select a



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fresh sheet, and proclaim that he had now transformed himself into a mere machine for writing at dictation, having seen the folly of trying to catch the ideas of people who did not know their own minds. This plan was always successful, for it mostly happened that Inspiration, easily frightened away at the best of times, would take herself off on the wings of the wind at the very suggestion of dispute. And if the damsel made bold to carry it off, the old letter-writer would thrust his tongue out and cackle at every word that he scratched upon the paper, and as tender passions are not easily dictated under these conditions the victory lay with the strong.

To pass from the fierce sunshine of the sweltering market-place where Time is steadily goading on the oxen that draw the wine cart, into the coolness and gloom of the cathedral, where Time is not, is as sudden a transition as the impressionist can wish for.

Yonder, in a little chapel on the north, is the wax image of San Pedro, patron saint of Santa Fe. It is contended that on the Eve of the Crucifixion the image shows signs of life, moves, sighs and trembles, and, for many years, on the day after the Crucifixion the astonished populace used to perceive that the key had changed from one hand to the other. This, so some said, took place at cock-crow, before the doors of the cathedral were flung open on Easter morn.

Santa Fe even now is celebrated for its processions, but it used to be famed for religious pomp of every kind.

Thus in Holy Week there were passion plays, in which people of repute took leading parts, and Corpus Cristi was the greatest day in the year, when the balconies and windows were hung with damask, silk

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cloths, or even coloured blankets, whilst the Host went through the city escorted by fixed bayonets.

And there was dancing of pretty girls in front of the great cathedral altar to the twanging of guitars, to the delight of the peasantry from the hillside all around and the scandal of any Englishman, not to the manner born, who happened to pass that way. And then the religious play, sometimes from the Old Testament, sometimes from the New—what an excitement!

It used to be acted in the great central square, with eager faces at all the balconies around and people on the housetops, whilst down below, the booths where sweets and toys and fans were sold throughout the fair, accommodated their quota of children from seven years old to seventy, those who had teeth chewing nuts, and those who were toothless chewing the cud of fancy, casting their minds back over many a Holy Week, the Holy Week when they were courting, the Holy Week when Pepe came back from the war, aye! and the Holy Week when the white-robed angels masquerading yonder had been replaced by a bivouac of French infantry, and many a woman's cry of despair went upward from the balconies around.

The actors used to be chosen from among the most zealous, pious, and presentable. I must not omit the last of these adjectives, for many were the aspirants of uncomely countenance to whom the good priest would say with saintly candour, "Son, thy piety is great among men, thy charity unbounded, but thou art cross-eyed."

It must not be imagined that every rôle was thus eagerly competed for. Several years once passed without a single Judas Iscariot being obtainable, and had you lived in Santa Fe you would know the reason.

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For the people take these things very much in earnest, and Judas Iscariot has been seen with his robe girt round his loins fleeing towards the hill, and followed by slingers and sharp-shooters. And after these events it was only by artifice that either a Satan or an Iscariot could be secured for Holy Week proceedings.

For some little time beforehand the father confessors would watch for the most suitable persons who came to confession, and when the hearing was over would say to the sinner of their choice, "For dealing falsely with thy brother in accounts, fifty paternosters; for bearing false witness before the judge, a hundred reals in charity, and for coveting thy neighbour's wife, *thou shalt be Judas Iscariot in the play!*"

These terrible words at length became so dreaded that never a man Jack could be persuaded to confess for fully two months preceding Holy Week, and there are not wanting people who affirm that this was the origin of the present generation of males never confessing at all.

And how did Santa Fe communicate with the outside world?

In the first place, Santa Fe was for the most part supremely indifferent whether it ever heard anything of the outside world at all, and felt self-sufficient and quite contented.

Dynasties might totter and fall, wars might rage, and earthquakes swallow whole cities. So long as they came not within a league or two of Santa Fe, the people were scarcely interested.

Their news arrived in driblets, very much hacked about, and seldom above suspicion.

Soldiers back from the wars told marvellous tales to open-eyed listeners, but these impressions seldom

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lasted, for the more sceptical would remark, "De luengas vias, luengas mentiras—Long travels bring long lies," and the others would shake their heads with a clack of the tongue, and confess that one knew not what to believe.

And the little that survived was generally untrue, for the soldiers mostly rapped off their biggest lies first, and when they descended to idle truths, no one would credit them. And these imputations of falsity were even cast upon the news that came by diligence, the facts most worthy of credence being, as before, the least believed. In those days, with the sea on one side and the mountains on the other, the diligence formed the only thread of communication with the outer world, and forsooth! it was a slender one.

For, what would you have? With thirty thousand souls in the peninsula depending for their living on smuggling and brigandage, with Carrasco and his company levying toll upon the diligence owners, and even issuing "passports" and "safe conducts" through his lines, there were nights when the diligence never arrived at all.

Santa Fe, ever looking up towards the mountains, had endowed them with a grisly history. They were the refuge of evil spirits banished from the plain by the exorcisms of mother church, each steeple protecting a zone of ten square miles or more according to its eminence, much as a lightning conductor protects a radius of thirty or forty yards according to its height.

And indeed there was good evidence that rumblings and fumes and subterranean fires existed, for they broke out every ten years or so, and shook the mountains to their bases.

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The very bishop himself was awakened one morning at a most unwonted hour by muffled thunder, and opening his eyes, beheld every drawer in the room come shaking out as if pushed from behind by a trembling finger, and old Juan Padila, the keeper of the bull-ring, scrambled out of bed and began to pray most fervently and cross himself, a man, look you, that had not said his prayers for thirty years. Therefore you will concede that the theory of those parts concerning evil spirits and the shrewd suspicions as to where the Devil kept his kitchen were more than warranted.

In fact, it was common knowledge that the breeze which arose at eventide was caused by all the little devils shivering when they heard *Las ánimas* sound from the cathedral tower.

Thus may it be said that Santa Fe stands between the Devil and the Deep Sea.

* * * * *

Surrounded by these influences two brothers were born in the early years of the nineteenth century. Antonio, the elder, was swarthy, impetuous and rebellious from his birth, but endowed with scanty foresight. Manuel was brown-haired and of a lighter skin, his eyes were blue and pensive, and he seldom acted without forecasting the results.

Thus it was that Antonio was doomed to burn his knuckles, scald his legs, and scorch his eyebrows ere learning that fire was not so to be trifled with, whilst Manuel, after one brief interview with a chestnut, concluded that fire was hot.

As the brothers grew up, each laughed at the other after his own fashion.

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Antonio was foolhardy and a daredevil, ingenious in devising practical jokes for others, but constantly falling into a trap himself.

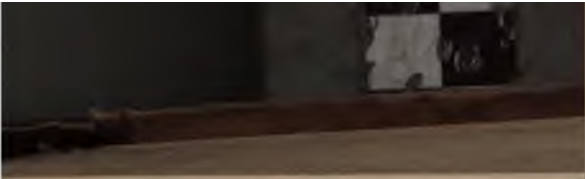
But Manuel was saintly, studious, and fond of contemplation.

He would hide himself in the gardens for hours together, shaded by a great pepper tree that grew beside a fountain, poring over *The History of the Famous Preacher Fray Gerundio de Campazas, alias Zotes, History of the Christian Kings, Lives of the Saints*, and other works taken from his father's bookshelves. In particular he loved to dwell upon the life of San Antonio, the insidious temptations with which the Evil One beset him in the wilderness, out of all which trials the saint came forth victorious, and God addressed him thus :

"Antony, I will always protect thee, and will render thy name *famous throughout the earth.*"

His brother Antonio laughed at Manuel's purity and fervour. Nevertheless the two boys were not bad friends, and stood by each other against a common enemy, as brothers always should and sometimes do.

Their fellowship was ended by the entrance of Manuel into the Company of Jesus as a novice, and here I may remark that Don Ricardo Nieto, his father, had been a close friend of the Jesuits, and had guarded their interests through troublous times whilst the Company were in banishment from Spain. It is said that he obtained possession of their convent on the hill overlooking Santa Fe, and maintained it in order at his own expense what time the Jesuits were in foreign parts. The exact nature of his connexion with them it is not our business to analyze, it merely explains to



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some extent the novitiate of Manuel in the college of Loyola in Guipúzcoa.

Antonio saw the convent doors close upon Manuel with a feeling of regret, tempered by no little amusement. He did not, however, manifest one tittle of surprise ; on the contrary, he reminded his mother that " he had always told her so."

Manuel chose the convent, Antonio chose the world. And be it known that Antonio's world was not the useful world, the artistic world, or the literary world. He became a sort of Columbus in search of a world of mischief, nor did he take long to find it.

Very soon his name became a terror to Santa Fe. During carnival week he simply went mad with delight. Sometimes he would be dressed as a flower-girl, with an enormous yellow wig and crimson mask, making every one smell his artificial roses with a needle in the centre. You bent your face good-humouredly towards the blossom, and " ¡ zas ! " you found yourself holding your nose in one hand and beating the air with the other. Or perhaps he would disguise himself and one of his friends as municipal police, and seeking out the personage of greatest gravity and innocence, preferably a judge or councillor, would hurry him down the Alameda towards the lock-up, followed at close distance by a furious female, also a confederate, screaming indignantly, " To gaol with this indecent old reprobate ! To gaol with him ! " and the more the wretched man protested the louder became her screams. On one occasion he succeeded in thus conducting the Alcalde himself from one end of the Alameda to the other before the genuine police became aware of what had happened.

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When Antonio arrived at man's estate his taste for foolery had only grown the stronger.

It is related of him that during one of those attacks of earthquake which occur at uncertain periods he made use of this opportunity for acting a farce of more than usual impudence. The people had in many cases deserted their houses, fearing a second shock, and although no worse accidents had befallen than the breakage of windows and ornaments, an encampment was made in the central square and the Alameda, and whole families equipped themselves with tents. This happened in August, when the nights were cloudless, hot, and stifling.

Antonio had his bedstead set up in the most conspicuous part of the Alameda in great state, surmounted by a mosquito-net, and furnished with mattress and bedclothes.

On the ground he chalked himself out a bedroom, with doors and windows all complete. In the various chalk-lined bays around this room he arranged his chairs, dressing-table and washstand. Beside the bed was a small table, on which stood a bottle, ostensibly of medicine but really containing rum, a prayer-book and a candlestick.

At midnight enter Antonio, who very seriously and deliberately lights his candle, walks up to his dressing-table, whose mirror has succumbed to the earthquake, and staring right through the empty frame into the entrance of a tent where the Marquesa de Bobadilla is unlacing her stays, commences to comb out his moustache and otherwise adorn himself.

A shrill "¡ Dios mío ! " from the marquesa, a hasty pulling together of the tent door, and Antonio continues to adorn himself, apparently lost in thought.

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He then goes to his imaginary window, which he boldly throws open, rests his arms upon an imaginary balcony, and with a sickly smile looks unutterable things across an imaginary street, and it does not concern him that these glances light upon the astonished face of the fat apothecary, who is standing at his tent-door with his mouth wide open.

After some twenty minutes of such buffoonery Antonio proceeds very leisurely to undress, hanging each garment from an imaginary wall-peg without taking notice that his clothes fall on the ground, and having donned his nightcap in the usual way, coughs with such violence that a head is poked out of every tent, takes a great dose of medicine, shakes his head, turns up the whites of his eyes, gets into bed and extinguishes the candle.

These proceedings attracted an enthusiastic audience when they became known, so that one youth would say to another, "Come with me to the Alameda, and we shall just be in time to see Don Antonio go to bed."

Without being too conscientious as to details, it may be said at once that the amusements of Don Antonio were none too savoury. At the age of twenty-five or thereabouts he was a tall and sallow man, rather hollow about the cheeks, but with fine black eyes, which had a mischievous twinkle in them, and seemed to be scanning one's weak points for future guidance. Amongst the ladies he was somewhat of a Don Juan Tenorio. Men and women alike were watchfully afraid of him.

In the fulness of time Don Ricardo Nieto and his wife were gathered to their forefathers. Don Ricardo himself fell suddenly dead of heart disease, which

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caused no little speculation in his two sons as to whether such weakness were hereditary.

Don Ricardo bequeathed unto his firstborn the very respectable fortune of six thousand golden ounces, equivalent to a sum of twenty thousand pounds.

To Manuel he very naturally left nothing, for the boy had chosen to open his accounts in that bank where moths do not corrupt nor thieves break through and steal. But Don Ricardo took what steps were in his power to secure a goodly balance, and knowing full well what a vast amount of dross must be paid over the counter here below in order to draw a single penny on the other bank of Styx (so exorbitant is the exchange) he bequeathed the remainder of his fortune in such a manner that the General of the Order of Jesuits found himself one morning in a most beatified condition, with his countenance all smiles and dimples, and his hands persistently washing themselves without any soap whatever, and indeed he had good cause.

And now let us ask why Manuel thus chose to give up the world. There are several forces which might have brought him to such an end.

Caprice could not be one of them, for Manuel was generally careful as to all his bases before forming conclusions of such moment, and on all but one occasion, which presently must come before us, he looked before he leaped.

Weariness of the world could not be possible in one so young, so hopeful, so full of zeal.

Fear of the world is an explanation that at once must be rejected when it is understood that Manuel, like Antonio, scarcely knew what it was to fear.

Fanaticism was no fit term for Manuel's quiescent mien and pensive gaze.



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Persuasion is scarcely applicable to one so strong of will and firm of purpose, although it must be confessed, that Don Ricardo had used every argument in favour of a monastic life, and had often sighed to think that in his own young days great barriers had put themselves between his destiny and his ambition. No doubt this influence was not without effect, but Manuel was bent on being a monk in any case. His father merely served to name the convent.

The force that drew him on was a longing for the truth. Once that truth were found, Manuel was prepared to shed his heart's blood for whatever purpose might be assigned in truth's behalf. He was ready to tribute all that wealth of reverence with which he had been born. He had a sincere yearning to do worship, he would rather that this worship should be for something beautiful, but in any case it must be for something true. The artist and the poet were struggling with the logician, for Manuel was an odd mixture of the emotional and the logical. Had he started upon his quest at a later date in life, when the emotional is dying out, who shall say what ending this story might have had ?

Instead of this his artist's nature was brought into contact at an early age, when impressions are made most easily, with all the picturesque entourage of the Romish Church.

Not that he yielded at once. Even if foredestined to play his part among these pomps and ceremonies, he took steps to assure himself that he was in the right. In the first place, Manuel, as an honest reasoner, started at the very root of his tree of knowledge, neither did any false ideas as to the wickedness of patient investigation daunt him one jot or tittle.

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world a man was either a Christian or an atheist. And Manuel, at that time, could only betake himself to one of these extremes.

Moreover, an unlovely God could have no part in the life of one like Manuel. Chaos itself were more attractive, for at least it held a vast and sombre grandeur of its own. Either the God of his fathers, or no God at all.

And so he gave up argument with his fellow-beings, and tried to reason these things out for himself. Manuel knew but little of such theories as Darwin and Spencer have now armed us with. Broadly, he could see that some kind of evolution was taking place in nature, for already such ideas had been put forward.

And possibly he started upon his struggle with Vacuity to make her disgorge the truth, just as well prepared as we are, who have all these treatises at our disposal. If such things are not to be thought out with thoughts at all, our present advancement is very much like climbing up St. Paul's in order to see the pole star at close quarters.

The conclusions of Manuel were quite useless for the guidance of posterity, being merely the outcome of emotion. But Manuel fondly believed that they were otherwise. The wish was father to the thought, and chance was the mother thereof. In reality, and to a prosaical mind, the manner of his final decision was a descent from the sublime to the ridiculous.

For several months after his arguments with the priests Manuel swayed between yea and nay, but nay was daily growing weaker, it only cropped up at intervals when the mind was oppressed.

His greatest argument in the affirmative was one that, unknown to him, had lain at the very root and



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origin of most religions. He could not see the beginning of life, he could not understand the forces that manifested themselves in nature. Not being able to understand them it never occurred to him that want of knowledge might be his sole and only stumbling-block.

Manuel, already hungering for something to worship, at length supplied the deficiency, a God.

What tho' in solemn silence, all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball :
What tho' no real voice or sound,
Amidst their radiant orbs be found,
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing as they shine,
"The hand that made us is Divine."

Still he doubted.

One calm evening he resolved to put an end to all his doubts. For some time past he had been arguing that a Creator who was jealous and wished for his recognition would surely condescend to give him some sign if asked. This sign he begged of heaven, and all that evening sat looking over the valley of Santa Fe from the hill-top towards the setting sun, yet never a sign was given.

Very much dejected he wandered moodily home. His mind was at such a tension that he lay tossing in bed without sleep. When at last he slumbered the dawn had nearly come, and with its earliest moments his dreams awakened him again.

He sat up in bed, and his mind returned immediately to its trouble of the night before.

"Nay," said he to himself, "I cannot believe."

And as chance would have it a cock crew.

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He rose from his bed and drew towards the balcony, where the faintest tint of rosy dawn was just commencing to show above the house-tops.

"I cannot believe it," he repeated.

Then, after a pause, during which he had opened his window to let in the morning air, he said to himself aloud in a voice of profoundest sorrow :

"I deny it."

And just at that moment right underneath his balcony the cock crew for the second time loud and lustily.

Manuel stood for a moment with his hand raised to his head, for certain remembrances had forced themselves upon him in a moment when his own condition of nervous exaltation, the solitude of the hour, and the mystery of dawn, were all combining to give the coincidence full meaning. First, he turned deathly pale, then, with a sob of overwhelming emotion, he sank upon his knees and lowered his head in prayer.

One month later he became a novice in the college of Loyola de Guipúzcoa.



CHAPTER II

"Passion-pale they met
And greeted : hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring."

GUINEVERE.

FOR awhile we must leave Santa Fe in which the story was begun, and to which it must return, following the young Jesuit to Guipúzcoa.

The solitary confinement of the first few weeks, the confession of his past life—innocent enough in all conscience—were events which sealed and doubly sealed Manuel's resolution.

The confession involved a reference to bygone doubts. In the hands of a cultured Jesuit the boy's thoughts were turned in the way that they should go. Instead of teaching the young idea how to shoot by means of a heavy broadside of dogma and hard words, the Father Confessor, with a quiet smile, bade him look around him at the miracles of heaven in every leaf and flower, and as that was precisely what Manuel had so recently been doing, he exclaimed that no further proof was necessary. And the Jesuit, who had been ready to lead up to a subtly woven proof, paused to admire his artless confirmation, and knew that his doubts were past.

Once having decided, Manuel never for one moment thought of turning back, and entered into his new life with the greatest zeal, winning golden opinions and pleasing all.

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When first he became a novice he was only sixteen years of age, and although sixteen years in Spain count for somewhat more than the same period of time in England, no other love than the purely devotional or purely filial had so far claimed admission to his heart. There comes a time in the life of every sane and healthy being when love of a different kind astonishes the senses, sometimes dawning gradually, at others closing boisterously upon us like a mighty rushing whirlwind.

Manuel at sixteen felt that he could guarantee his future conduct from seventeen to seventy. Mark what happened to him at twenty-five. A pair of woman's eyes looked at him, and thereby hangs a tale. Not a very new one either, for it has been the lot of more young priests than ever heard mass in the Chapel of Loyola de Guipúzcoa.

In the year 1834 cholera was spreading among the more densely peopled cities of the Peninsula. For this calamity it was necessary to find a whipping-boy.

Several good souls having whispered that the Jesuits were poisoning the wells, and that this was what caused the plague, the mob attacked the convents and massacred the good fathers, who, with all their diplomacy and ambition, had never harmed the poor, and had ministered to the hungry and afflicted.

In the two years that followed Queen Cristina was compelled, against her will, to suppress the order, and to declare the Company of Jesus banished from her dominions.

Spain in those days, without trains or telegraph, was even more unwieldy than it is to-day. In the Northern provinces a Carlist war was raging.

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For many reasons, which I will not here enter upon too fully (Spanish politics being somewhat less fathomable than the Atlantic), the palatial college of Loyola, the "marvel of Guipúzcoa," in a delicious valley watered by the Urola, was allowed to continue its course uninterfered with until 1840, thus holding the unique position of a Jesuit college in a country whence all Jesuits had been banished four or five years ago. The end, however, came at last.

It is easy to comprehend that, with the foreshadowing of their departure and the preparations for the journey, the routine of the college became relaxed. The attention of the Jesuit Fathers was utterly absorbed in the conflicting news that every morning brought them. Long and bravely did they fight against the untoward event. Since they had so far evaded banishment, might they not form a nucleus for the re-gathering of the Jesuits in Spain?

All the vast influence of the company abroad was occupied for many months in trying to hold the fort, and many a secret messenger sped through France and across the Pyrenees to Her Most Catholic Majesty the Queen of Spain.

But monastic institutions were in high disfavour with the people. It was even proposed to reduce the salary of the primate from £90,000 per annum to the miserable pittance of £1,500, and so in proportion all along the line.

"Gentlemen," said Don García Blanco in Cortes with much gusto, "the reformation of the clergy is one of the greatest works on which the Cortes can be engaged. It is one of the grand reforms the nation expects from us. The object is to fix in a definite manner the condition of two hundred and sixty thou-



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Ordinary letters, addressed in black ink, were to be carried in his pockets ; letters addressed in violet ink were to be treated with special care ; whilst if a small letter arrived written in violet ink, and also *marked with a Golden Fleur de Lys*, it was to be either burned, swallowed, or thoroughly destroyed, should any one waylay him. Doubtless the traveller by diligence and the lay brother on mule-back had the same instructions. Manuel's orders were that he was not to betray any haste, but rather to saunter, as if in search of specimens. Alas ! he found a "specimen" that the Father Rector had not foreseen.

He did not always leave or enter the college in the same direction, sometimes returning by one path, sometimes by another, and often burdened with an armful of fern roots and wild flowers, for his love of Nature assisted him to make his acting realistic.

Manuel was a handsome young priest, very little shorter than Antonio, and with curly chestnut hair and deep blue eyes, the features being cut somewhat more delicately than Antonio's. There was a something magnetic and sympathetic about his presence which one noticed without being able to explain. His mouth was so perfect that one might almost have called it feminine.

He was a goodly picture for a lass to look upon, and during his ministrations to the poor more than one damsel on bended knees had sighed as she looked into those pensive eyes and thought to herself "what a shame to make him a priest ; how handsome he would have looked as a bull-fighter in spangled jacket, white silk stockings and colilla," or, kissing his hand in reverence, had wished that she might kiss his lips in love.

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One fine summer's evening, sauntering down the road where it passes through the wood and a dark avenue of trees rises from the slight embankment on either side, Manuel caught sight of a woman's figure up above him to the left, stooping among the bushes and ferns.

His footfall startled her, and drawing herself up she turned towards the intruder and brushed her hair back from off her forehead and shook her head as if to clear her eyes of one or two stray locks that persistently fell back.

The girl was blonde, and her hair was almost golden ; the features were not exactly beautiful, but at least they were bonny, and, for a peasant, somewhat refined. The mouth had a saucy smile, and the eyes had a mischievous penetration that looked a man through and through. It was no face for a handsome young priest to look upon, for there was a something in that roguish look that taunted a man for being a priest, and challenged his sense of gallantry.

His eyes met hers.

Manuel felt such a shock as he had never known before ; in fact, so strange and so irresistible was this earthquake that was quivering in his heart and in his brain that he gazed into those saucy eyes for several seconds before realizing what was happening, then blushed as crimson as the sunset, turned pale, and wended his way homeward. Was this a flood of sin that the Evil One, in an idle moment of unpreparedness, had swept over him ? Oh, how insidious, how fierce, how wicked yet how lovely this onslaught seemed !

And Teresa gave her head another shake, wiped the light perspiration of her labour from her forehead, looked after the young priest with a smile until he



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disappeared behind the poplars, and fell to gathering more sticks.

But more than once she broke into a charming little laugh, and muttered to herself—

“What a pretty priest ! ”

And then—

“What a pity ! ”

And the sun having set, she wandered back to the charcoal-burner's lonely hut on the hillside, and flinging down her bundle of faggots, turned her shoulders upon the scolding old woman who was fanning the embers of the little hearth, and ensconced herself in the one and only bedroom. Seated on a rush chair beside a miserable lamp of ancient fashion, she fell to looking at her face in a piece of broken mirror, and who can say what fancies she saw therein ?

Meanwhile Manuel had gone down the hill towards the convent gates wearing very much the appearance of one who has received a blow in the dark and wonders whence it came. Moreover, there was a lurking suspicion of guilt in the young man's eyes. He felt that his thoughts had wandered for a moment out of the narrow path of priestly rectitude. The suddenness and completeness of his aberration filled him with a sense of shame.

And now must be put on record a fact whose importance will transpire as time goes on.

Manuel did not confess his fault.

To some it may appear ridiculous that an involuntary thought should need confession, but those who know how searching is the inquiry of the Jesuit confessional will know that everything which troubles the conscience must be confessed, whether it be wrong or not.

Despite the stern discipline whereby a junior's ideas

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and will are brought under control of his seniors, Manuel had still retained some portion of his former strength of purpose and honesty of thought. He did not deem the incident worthy of confession. He tried to insist that it had already been forgotten. But such was not the case. Pretty Teresa's face was in the young priest's dreams and haunted him.

Why was it that a day or two later he passed by the very same road? Might he not have known that the incident was liable to repeat itself? Did he fear the repetition, or long for it? Manuel himself had sometimes thought that all human beings were made up of a vast horde of contending particles. Each particle represented an ancestor, and some of these ancestors incited a man to do good, others to do evil.

If it were so, the devil contrived that the same roguish scapegraces who had always prevailed in Antonio's parliament should reign for a brief season in Manuel.

Teresa—marvellous coincidence—was in the same place, at the same hour, and their eyes met in the same manner, and Manuel's cheeks flushed with the self-same guilty red.

After Manuel had gone past his ear was stung by the sound of a roguish laugh.

He turned hot and cold, then, with a sudden impulse, went back and stood before the girl.

"Daughter, why do you mock me?"

She cast down her eyes and trifled with her armful of sticks, being at first abashed, then, gradually raising her gaze from the priest's feet until it rested upon his face, during which movement a line of fire seemed to be rising all around him, and his heart told him that he had impetuously accepted a battle for which he



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was not equipped, she smiled very winsomely and answered—

“I was laughing at my thoughts.”

“Nay! It was at me you laughed.”

They exchanged a prolonged and steady glance. The priest's eyes were the first to falter.

The girl perceived her victory, and with a quiet laugh straightened herself and placed one hand upon her hip.

“What if I did?”

The young priest hesitated a moment as if about to speak, then turned on his heel and hurried away towards the convent.

Alas! what a scene of turmoil was Manuel's poor head that night. And pray what right had petticoats to thrust themselves into the breviary? Woman's eyes looked at him from every corner of his cell, and even when he frowned and bent his eyes upon his books, the hyphens were Cupid's bows, and all the S's laughed at him. J had a flippant way of cocking up his tail, and all the little a's looked bashfully away from him. He read the same passages over and over again without comprehending one word of what was written, then rose and paced feverishly up and down his cell.

How foolish he had been deliberately to seek temptation! What a terrible revelation, what a rude awakening! For Manuel no longer denied that his eyes had looked love into the woman's eyes.

At the end of an hour's fierce battling of the various elements within him he knelt in prayer, and resolving henceforth to shun the scene of his defeat, cried, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from all evil.”

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Still, he did not confess.

On the morrow, which was a great feast day, the Father Rector preached to his flock after mass was over.

"The Company," said he, "were passing through a temporary period of affliction. In all probability his listeners were destined, within a few brief months, to suffer banishment, and to be scattered among the nations of the earth.

"Let it not be thought that God had forgotten them. Christ, their General on high, was ever watchful of His chosen band, and had devised this change in furtherance of His will.

"But now, what ought to be the spirit in which the Jesuit should go forth among the nations? Was Christ's favourite warrior, His ideal of martial Christianity, to hie him by back lanes and unfrequented paths in order to avoid the glance of Satan?

"No! The Jesuit's conscience was pure enough for him to face the world with flashing eyes, and, firm as a rock, to die beside his standard, sword in hand.

"Many were the vicissitudes they might have to undergo, and great were the temptations. These they must learn to vanquish rather than to shun. For a constant running away from every new temptation in the circumstances they were now about to face might render them useless to Christ."

And then, after much discoursing in this manner, the good father told them how closely St. Paul had anticipated the Jesuit's attitude when going forth to fight the good fight.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the



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darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

“ ‘Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness ; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace ; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’ ”

When Manuel returned to his cell he fell into deep meditation. From his narrow embrasure he could survey the dark green forest that ran up the mountain side in front of him. From one point in the distant sea of foliage rose a lazy column of smoke. The autumnal tints were just commencing to show themselves.

He had prayed God not to lead him into temptation. This then was God’s reply, given through the mouth of the priest His servant.

“ These they must learn to vanquish rather than to shun.”

“ So be it,” thought he. “ But God help me ! ”

One or two days later Manuel went out to meet the messenger along the road, and took from him several letters. One of them was in a small square envelope sealed with wax. The seal was a peculiar one. Manuel had seen it once before. Judging by the texture of the paper, Manuel surmised that the tiny missive had come from a far country. It was simply addressed “ To the Father Rector of the College,” in a beautiful handwriting, evidently that of a woman, and if Manuel had spent his young life in the courts of Europe instead of shutting himself up in the

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cloisters, he would have known that that hand was royal.

What most attracted the young priest's attention, however, was not so much the handwriting or the seal as the fact that the envelope bore a *Golden Fleur de Lys*, whilst the address was written in violet ink. Immediately he placed it in his bosom, and, thrusting the other letters into his pockets, turned to go.

"Be careful, brother," murmured the man on the mule, "and God be with you!" Wherewith he rode on towards the village, and Manuel sprang into the wood, and went crackling twigs and crisping the fallen leaves under foot as he made towards the convent. When he came to the point where the two roads parted, he chose the more circuitous way, and wound round the hill side, making for the road that he knew so well.

The clouds looked threatening, and a few rain-drops had already fallen; there was an ominous sound of thunder in the distance. Along the road that passed beneath the avenue of chestnuts the darkness was almost as heavy as night.

Instinctively he looked towards the spot where Teresa used to gather sticks alongside a fallen poplar. She was not there.

But a little farther on, as fate would have it, he caught sight of her at a turn in the road, hurrying home as fast as her feet would take her, and with a heavy bundle of faggots perched upon her head.

A thunderstorm had commenced to rattle overhead, and occasional flashes of lightning, followed rapidly by ear-splitting crashes of thunder, told that the fringe of the disturbance was already passing over the forest.



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For some hundred paces Teresa did not notice that any one was behind her, then she became aware of Manuel's footsteps, and turning suddenly to look round with the bundle still upon her head, stumbled against a large stone and slightly sprained her ankle. Down came the faggots, and in the midst of a most awful thunderclap Teresa suddenly found herself fallen on the ground with a hazy impression that the thunderclap was part of the disaster.

No doubt the girl was much more frightened than hurt, but for all that she did not attempt to rise.

Manuel bent over her, but whether her eyes were closed in a genuine fainting fit, or whether they were merely shut in order that she might not look upon so modest a priest, or whether she had not recognized him, and thought that the Devil himself had got hold of her, the reader is left to surmise for the present, on the understanding that time will clear up all doubts.

When Manuel bent over her and called “¡Hija!” several times, and asked her if she had hurt herself, she did not reply.

And the darkness gathered thicker and thicker, whilst the rain began to pour. If cold water were all the maid required to bring her to, forsooth she had enough of it. But this evidently was a case for smelling salts, burnt feathers, and unlacing of stays. At least, Manuel had a dim recollection of such measures having been taken on similar occasions in his youth. A pretty fool he was to apply such remedies! And on which side might her stays happen to be laced up, or had she any stays at all?

Manuel convinced himself that she had not; but ah! what an agitating thing for a young priest to have to

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verify, and thanks to the darkness that one might not see his face !

After a moment's indecision Manuel took the girl in his stalwart arms and bore her along the road towards the wood. He knew that the hut was close by.

The burden did not trouble him a whit ; he was surprised to find himself so strong. Presently he reached the little clearing where stood the whitewashed hut, with its clumsy red tiles and its worm-eaten door.

The trees bent down and kissed the roof from behind the hut, and a fig-tree grew in front of it. Piles of logs and smaller firewood surrounded the clearing. The fowl had gone to roost upon the logs, and there was no sound save from the little spring which gurgled ten yards from the door, and had, in all likelihood, caused the old hut to be built there, for otherwise the site had nothing to recommend it.

Over the door and under it was streaming a dull red glow from the interior, and when Manuel pushed his way in and peered through the scanty light that was afforded by the hearth, he saw a rude couch covered by matting, on which he tenderly laid his burden ; then, going to the door, he brought in a log and some faggots, and flung them on the embers, which hissed and crackled indignantly ; then with the rush fan that lay on one side of the hearth he kindled the cinders into flame.

The cottage inside was whitewashed all over, and tocino, dried herbs and seed pods hung from the gnarled rafters, forming weird shadows against the slanting roof.

Going to the couch, he bent over Teresa, whose eyes were still closed. Then he began to grow frightened. Surely so young a woman could not have fallen dead

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with heart disease? Had she been struck by the flash?

He placed a hand on either side of her, and, bending down closely, listened for her breath. And just then the roguish flame that had been leaping so honestly and lighting the room right well, chose to subside, and again there was nothing but a dull red glow all round the cottage, so dull that Manuel could not be quite sure that her eyes were not half open and looking at him. He bent yet closer.

And oh! strange to say, two arms rose slowly upwards and folded themselves around his neck and drew his head so low that his face touched hers, and when he drew back his lips were aflame with the print of a fervid kiss.

The girl's arms fell by her side, and she heaved a mighty sigh, then said half audibly—

"Ah! It was so good—so good!"

"What was good, daughter?"

"When you were carrying me."

Then a long pause, during which his guilty eyes watched the fitful flame that now and again rose, and then died out, as if ashamed. At last she spoke again—

"How strong you are!"

"Where is your mother, child?"

"Gone to the village. She must be waiting for the storm to pass. She will be back anon."

"And your father?"

"He has gone to Santander, since yesterday."

"And who is your father?"

"Blas the charcoal burner. He is a giant."

"Yet you—are far from a giantess. And how well you speak Castilian! Are you not Basque? Did you hurt yourself?"

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“ My foot, yes ! ”

“ Does it pain you ? ”

“ A little, but I had forgotten it.”

He turned his eyes towards her once more, and she rested her hand caressingly upon his shoulder. Oh ! how his heart leaped and throbbed. Then she said again, as if it pleased her—

“ How strong you are ! ”

Then, when he took her hands and bent towards her face, she laughed and whispered—

“ You thought I was fainting. Not I ! I was watching your face through my eyelashes all the while you carried me.”

Here the flame went out again.

And, seeing that the storm has passed and the door is partly open, you and I will go out too.



CHAPTER III

Falstaff. "I did not think that Master Silence had been a man of this mettle."

KING HENRY IV.

WHEN Manuel reached the college gates he was panting for breath and pale of face. Orders had been left that he was to go direct to the room of the Father Rector, and, gathering himself together and bidding his heart be still, he straightway sought the old man's presence, and stood before him all unkempt, his garments soaked with rain and his feet covered to the ankles in mud.

A cheerful fire was burning upon the hearth, for the evening was somewhat cold. Beside the hearth sat the good father in his easy chair. He smiled at the young man's haste and stains of travel with benevolent approval, and, laying his book upon the reading desk at his side, first pulled the bell, then raised the lamp shade, so that the light shone upon Manuel's face, and, folding his hands together, leant back in his easy chair.

The door opened, and a lay brother came in.

"Set a cover upon the refectory table beside the fire," commanded the Rector. "Some of the chicken broth we had at dinner, boiling hot; a cutlet, and a decanter of Málaga wine."

But Manuel's eyes did not sparkle, though for ten hours he had not broken his fast.

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"And now," said the Padre Rector with the keen relish of curiosity about to be gratified, "let us see what our zealous and trusty scout has brought us in."

Manuel put his hand in the bosom of his vest, plunged it deeper and deeper, grew redder and redder in the face, opened his mouth wider and wider, and stared at the Rector aghast.

"What is amiss?" asked the latter, beginning to feel uncomfortable.

"I have lost it."

"Lost what?"

"The letter bearing a golden Fleur de Lys."

"¡Jesús, María y José!"

The little Rector was now on his feet, his hands raised to his spectacles, which he endeavoured to adjust to some such focus as would make things wear a different aspect.

"Feel again!"

Manuel felt again, turned out from his pockets the four or five ordinary letters, which the Rector threw impatiently aside, and made so diligent a search that it could not very well have been more thorough were he looking for a flea.

"There is no doubt, Father, I have lost it."

For a moment the Rector sat down, then bounced to his feet and rang the bell furiously. The lay brother came in again, and, venturing to speak first—

"I have already placed the broth and wine upon the refectory table."

"Truly?" cried the Rector. "Then, sir, mark me well. You may take the broth and pour it out of the refectory window, you may throw the cutlet into the refectory fire, and you may give the Málaga wine to His Majesty the Devil, who happens to be some-

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where in the vicinity this very night. Stay! where are you going?"

"To do as I am bidden."

"First of all find Padre Bartolomé, and bid him prepare a squad of twelve or fourteen brothers, all with torches. Something has been lost in the woods, and no one shall sleep to-night until we find it."

When the door had closed, the Father Rector began to speak his mind.

"Do you know, sir, what you have done?" he asked, suddenly halting in the middle of one of his frantic passages across the room with his hands clasped tightly behind his back.

Manuel hung his head.

"Have you realized the totally unimaginable disaster that has befallen?"

Manuel was silent.

"No, you cannot. I didn't expect you could."

After another turn or two the old man came up to him, and, looking closely into his face and tapping him on the chest—

"You have lost a letter such as before now has set one nation warring with another; you have lost a letter such as might ruin the prospects of a crowned head; you have lost a letter which may undo the Company of Jesus and set them back a century or more. That letter contained the key to the cypher of all the documents we have received from a certain country in the past few days, and of several that may still be on the way. And, what is worse, there is reason to believe that some of those documents have been waylaid.

"And now, my God! you straightway furnish them with the key! And no one knows what was in the letter besides, written in plain Spanish, for the great

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lady who wrote it is apt to be careless at times. She may have offered assistance, which will not be forthcoming now, for I cannot accept it unless I know for certain. And she may have named dukes and marquises that are toiling like slaves in the good cause, aye! and may be toiling to-morrow in the galleys, thanks to *you*!”

Thus did the infuriated Rector chide Manuel, and said to him many bitter things besides. At length, seeing that the young priest was suffering most intensely, and being a considerate man at heart and a good Jesuit to boot, he refrained from further scolding and went out to organize the search.

Down in the valley that night, and from the opposite hill-side, one or two wakeful people who certainly should have been in bed, were amazed by a curious sight. On the following morning, when they narrated the event, their neighbours looked upon them roguishly and winked to one another behind their hats, ascribing the impression to *aguardiente*. In course of time, however, it was found that so many drunken men had observed the same phenomenon that there must surely be some truth in it. This is what they saw.

First, from the Jesuit College in the valley there came out a line of light. Little by little this line spread itself out until it was seen to consist of some fourteen or fifteen stars.

These stars then wandered from side to side, sometimes eclipsing themselves behind the trees, anon re-appearing in the open.

After more than an hour, the foremost star worked its way on to the high road, and then the other stars joined it one by one, all combining to form one star of great magnitude.



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Then, after ten minutes' pause, this large star commenced shooting off small stars into the woods again, and eventually the whole constellation regained the college and disappeared.

Not only was this extraordinary spectacle witnessed by the late retirers overnight, but the early risers on the morrow were surprised at the unwonted number of Jesuits, who, three and three, with book in hand, came wandering from the convent, sniffing the morning air and revelling in the beauties of Nature. Indeed, it was remarkable how curiously they scanned the fallen leaves, which certainly had tints in them deserving of admiration. Some people conjectured that the good fathers were looking for mushrooms, but they were wrong.

Not once, nor twice, nor thrice, but many times, did Padre Bartolomé ask sternly of Manuel, "Have we passed over every foot of the ground?" and each time Manuel answered him, "Yes."

But Manuel's answer was not quite correct. It contained an error of just about one per cent. Later in the day Manuel found himself busied over the following problem:—

If in a path of five thousand yards one searches all but fifty, and cannot discover a letter that has been dropped along that path, where is the letter?

And it is evident that Manuel had puzzled out the solution of this problem, for, as soon as he was allowed an opportunity, he sought Teresa, whom he found at her usual task of gathering faggots for making charcoal and for selling in the town. To be sure, she was very daintily dressed for a hewer of wood and drawer of water.

"I have not seen your love letter," cried the girl hotly, with a wave of her hand.

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"Indeed, it was no love letter."

"No love letter? Then why are you so eager to find it?"

"Because——"

"*Because* you are burning to read all the soft things that she says to you" (this very bitterly) "and all the 'darlings' and 'sweethearts' that she calls you" (putting her hands upon her hips and her arms akimbo), "and to count the kisses she sends you, and you a *priest*. Where is your shame?"

"Teresa, have pity—I tell you the truth, it was no love letter. It contained matters of vast importance, matters more weighty than you can dream of, secrets that might ruin a man."

The girl leant against a tree and regarded him for a moment with curiosity; then, coming towards him and resting her hands upon his shoulders—

"'Secrets that might ruin a man'? Then they are secrets that might *make* a man."

"How so?"

"A secret that can mar a man is a secret that can *make* a man," repeated Teresa cryptically and with much relish.

"And you have not seen it?"

Her quick eyes glanced at him, she paused a moment, then answered boldly—

"No! Nor, did I see it, should I know how to read it."

Whereupon she clasped him round the neck and kissed his face, nor would she allow him to resume his questioning.

* * * * *

Some months after the mysterious disappearance of the letter marked with a Fleur de Lys, Antonio and

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Manuel were pacing up and down the road that led to the convent.

It was eventide, the sun was about to set, and in all the countryside the goats were being driven in by ragged urchins, who hastened the loiterers with well-directed pebbles. Only the younger goats appeared to need such pressing, the elders preferring to keep well in the front, or, if perchance they lingered, their instinct told them when their persecutor was stooping for a stone, and before the missile was sped upon its way, they would carry their buttocks elsewhere with a derisive "Boh-r-r," which was audible across the valley in the stillness of the evening.

Antonio was in his riding clothes, and every now and then he slapped his leggings with his whip or cut the head off a tempting thistle. His air was as careless as ever, his brow unclouded, his mood serene. And if he had not retired to rest until early morning, be sure that he had not risen till after noon.

"I thought you wanted to see me about something urgent," said Antonio, throwing his whip ever so high and catching it again. "Your letter gave me quite a start. I never knew you wrote so badly, chico."

"It is so long since I saw you," murmured Manuel, looking on the ground.

Evidently there was something more to come, and Manuel did not know how to make a beginning. Antonio, indeed, suspected that such was the case, but he was either too callous or too asinine to help him with his difficulty, and continued to hum a tune and to throw his whip about. Occasionally the young priest darted a quick glance at him from out of the corner of his eye, and there was a growing something, very much like contempt, intermingled with the

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uneasiness, that had marked his features ever since he saw Antonio coming up the hill upon his nag.

A struggle was going on in Manuel's brain 'twixt pride and prudence. And to hide him from the gathering storm he was even willing, like Trinculo, to creep in under the mooncalf's gaberdine.

After a lengthy pause he thus began—

"I suppose that, in the course of your harebrained freaks, you have had many affairs of gallantry?"

"I suppose so!" answered Antonio drily, raising his eyebrows.

Manuel paused again for a moment and stooped to gather a fern leaf at his feet. He had assumed a tone which was almost frivolous, and certainly it was most distasteful to him. Yet he felt that Antonio would only laugh at him if he laid bare his heart with all its surging hopes and fears. With all his quiet scorn for Antonio's shallowness, he flinched before his cruel buffoonery. And this was the judge to whom he must needs submit himself!

"Of course—you never chat to me about such things, because—you have got it into your head that the subject is obnoxious to me."

"Since when has it been attractive to you, brother priest?"

"I did not say that it was exactly—*attractive*."

"Then what the devil did you say?"

"I implied that the subject was not quite so obnoxious to me as you thought."

"Same thing, isn't it?"

"Oh dear no!"

"Well, what are you going round and round in circles for? what's amiss?"

"Nothing!"



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Antonio began to grow impatient, and whistled with a resigned air, as much as to say, "If you *won't* tell me what is the matter, you won't, and I am sure it does not trouble me much whether you do or not."

This, indeed, was not the first time that Manuel had thus attempted to unbosom himself, and had come to a full stop. He cleared his throat, and, looking very hard at the fern stalk which he twiddled between his thumb and finger, and growing just a shade paler, he said—

"Well, if you must know——"

"*Must* know! I don't insist at all. Say what you like."

"Well, I wish to tell you."

"Ah! That is 'flour out of another bin,' chico!"

"I must first of all tell you that we are all of us weak at times."

"Even *you*?"

"Yes! Weak, that is to say, in—ever so many little things. One indulges in too much food or too much sleep, for instance, or one—reads a forbidden book that is good for naught."

"Ah!"

"Or one yields to light thoughts at a moment when prayer and fasting have been ordained."

"Quite so!"

"Or one loiters along the pleasant paths in the summer-time, when the day's task has yet to be completed."

"Very true! I have done it myself."

"All these things have I done."

"Humph!"

"And more!"

"Oh!"

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"What do you mean by 'Oh'?"

"That now we are coming to it. Don't let me interrupt you."

"I have done much more than all these, Antonio, and I am a wretched sinner."

"The devil!"

"And"—here Manuel with a sudden outburst threw all refinements to the winds—"I have asked you to come in order that you might help us in our great affliction."

Antonio came to a standstill with both hands buried very deeply in his pockets and his short whip standing out of one of them like a flagstaff. He opened his eyes very wide and shouted—

"'Us'! How many of you *are* there?"

"At present—only two."

"What?"

Manuel hung down his head, and muttered something half intelligibly.

Antonio then sat down firmly on the ground with his hands still in his pockets and his legs wide apart, without taking his eyes for one moment off his brother's face, and thus for some little time regarded him open-mouthed in blank astonishment. But if the young Jesuit gathered from this beginning that Antonio was capable of taking the matter seriously, he was much mistaken.

Nothing would have better satisfied Manuel in his distress than for Antonio to revile him, to reason with him, expostulate with him, and then, gradually overcoming the first few moments of anger, to condole with him and discuss the happiest issue out of his affliction.

But Antonio, after staring open-mouthed for fully thirty seconds, placed his hands between his knees and



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began rocking himself backward and forward, with the most horrible contortions of the face, then, springing to his feet as if he could control himself no longer, held both his sides and laughed first "Ho! ho! ho!" then "Ha! ha! ha!" then "He! he! he!" like the great ass that he was and ever would be. And after he had made an exhibition of himself in this manner for more time than Manuel would have thought possible, he lay on the ground laughing wearily, with tears in his eyes, and looking every now and again over his shoulder at his brother, then turning away to laugh again and kicking one leg up into the air in a derisive way that he had when he wished to be very funny.

The Jesuit stood looking down at him with curled lip.

At length Antonio arose, and, giving his brother a round-armed slap upon the shoulders, cried very boisterously—

"Well done, chico! well done! So that you managed to forget for an hour that you were a priest, and to remember that you were a man. And what have you told this to *me* for?"

"Certainly not in the hope of receiving good counsel or assistance," replied Manuel bitterly.

"I don't know so much about that. Who is to help you if I can't, chico? And is the lady old or is she young, is she dark or fair, thin or fat, or is she—¡caracoles!—you little devil! You don't mean to say she is a nun?"

"I never said anything of the kind. She is a wood-cutter's daughter."

"Ah ya! In the pleasant shadows when the nightingale is singing tra-la-la, tra-la-la, eh? And

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is there a spring that gurgles past the cottage door ? ”

“ Yes. How did you know ? ”

“ Because there always *is* a spring. It is one of the symptoms. And how did it all happen ? ”

Manuel’s blushes implied that this was too searching a question ; therefore the other changed it to—

“ How did you get to know her ? ”

“ We looked into each other’s eyes and ——. What is the matter with you ? ”

“ Nothing ! Go on ! ”

“ At last, one evening in a terrible storm, she slipped and sprained her ankle, just as she was walking along in front of me.”

“ And what did you do ? ”

“ I carried her in my arms to the cottage.”

“ Naturally ! The shepherd bringing in the wounded lamb. Well ? ”

“ And then——”

“ Yes ? ”

Manuel still altered and hung down his head. Antonio glanced at him sideways, his features working, then suddenly he raised his right arm above his head, as though addressing the heavens, and roared out the old Murciana verse :—

“ Rosa, si no te cojí-í-í-
Rosa, si no te cojí-í-í-í-
Fué por que no me dio gana-a-a-.”¹

“ Why do you play the fool ? ” said Manuel angrily.

“ Because, little brother of my soul ! ” replied Antonio, clapping him on the shoulder, “ I must either sing or laugh or burst ! ”

¹ “ Rose, if I plucked thee not, ’twas because I did not choose.”

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Antonio's loud solo had roused some birds on a tree branch just over their heads. Antonio glanced up into the dark foliage to see what all this fluttering and twittering meant, then back to his brother's face. And he read in the eyes of Manuel such growing resentment that he took him by the arm and said, reassuringly and impetuously—

"If you want help, lad, faith, you have come to the right quarter for it. I am with you in this business through thick and thin, never fear! Now, first of all, I suppose you have confessed?"

"Confessed! And still a member of the college!"

"Well—but what are you going to do? Give up the priesthood for a beginning, eh?"

"No!" replied Manuel, coming to a standstill and knitting his brows with much determination.

"Then you are a great fool! Surely you've had enough of this masquerading in a gown? Surely you can see you are not fitted for it? ¡Caracoles! You have risen ten inches in my esteem; don't, for God's sake, fall back twenty, by telling me you still mean to be a lantern-jawed priest! Why, lad, you have the making of as brave a man in you as ever danced a bolero or faced a bull. ¡Jesús! If you'd only tie your petticoats round your waist and catch hold of a guitar, there are women in Madrid would trip it on the table as long as you liked to play to them, aye, and drink out of the same copa with you, duchesses and countesses! Do you know, chiquito, that you'd make more havoc in the dovecots, with that pensive face of yours, than Don Juan Tenorio himself?"

Manuel made an impatient gesture.

"My ambition," said he, "is far otherwise."

"And what is your ambition?"

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"I have been tempted and have fallen, but there is yet time for me to repent and become a good priest."

"Oh! of course!" rejoined Antonio, pushing his tongue into his cheek, "if you confess and are absolved."

He looked at Manuel under his eyebrows.

Manuel bit his lip and seemed troubled. After a while he went on—

"My determination is even greater than before. I would sooner gain distinction as a priest—and especially a Jesuit priest—than any other distinction that I can think of. And this, we must not call ambition, for the greatest among us is the lowliest."

Antonio sighed, and began to cut at the thistle stalks again.

"God has given me a sign," continued Manuel, as though speaking to himself, for now that Antonio's derisive mood had ended, he no longer treated him seriously, and even fell to musing. "There is no true happiness in this life but calm. The joys of mankind—what are they? Each succeeded by bitter penance! For me the even pleasure of communion with my soul, of studying my Redeemer and His will. Joy is a riot, in whatever shape or form, outside the cloister. Joy brings Catastrophe fast treading upon his heels. God has given me a sign, and the devil attempts to bar my path at every turning. God still wills it that I should devote my life to Him."

"And—the girl?"

"Teresa and I part for ever. There is no other way."

"It is all arranged, then?"

"No; that is partly why I wished to see you."

"What whistle am *I* to blow in this business?"



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"Has it not occurred to you how you might assist me?"

"Frankly, it has not dawned. I always was an ass."

"At all events," said Manuel, threading his arm through his brother's, "you always were a rake, and there is no telling how many affairs you have been mixed up in, or—what are the results."

"I like candour."

"Yes, and now I am coming to the point. Let me ask you frankly, Antonio, amongst so many scandals that have been laid at your door (some, perhaps, unjustly) is it possible that one more scandal would be either here or there?"

"Oh-h-h-h!"

"You begin to understand?"

"Oh, *perfectly*."

"And the idea—does not please you?"

"Let me stop for a moment to consider. There is a sensation beginning to dawn, but I am not quite sure whether it is agony or delight. Go on a little farther with your proposals."

"Antonio, do not let us fool each other when such vital issues are at stake. Either you will or you will not. Which is it to be? Let me place before you straightforwardly my proposition. What harm would it do you to remove this girl to another part of the country, to make her an allowance, and to let people form whatever conclusions they like? If you will not, I must perforce give up my future, claim from you an allowance for myself, and—and marry her."

"Don't be a fool! I haven't yet refused you, have I? Now let me give you my answer. I will take your sweetheart away with me to Santa Fe; she shall

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have a cottage to live in and an onza every month to spend, and—let people say what the devil they please ! What does it matter to me ? ”

“ To Santa Fe ? ” said Manuel thoughtfully, and took his brother’s arm.

They continued to pace along the road and to develop their arrangements for fully another hour. At length from across the valley came the distant tinkle of a church bell, and Antonio, looking at his watch, found that la oración had already come and gone, and, looking at the moon, saw that it was climbing up above the tree-tops.

It was yet possible for them to reach the college in time for praying souls out of purgatory (Las ánimas), and as Antonio’s horse was tied up in the yard and he wished to kiss the Rector’s hand before departing, they turned their faces towards the college once again, and went talking eagerly and looking up at the multitude of windows, whence streamed a yellow light, and at the sparkling tiles which the moon was already glinting.

And Manuel, although he did not fully unbosom himself to his brother, felt most profoundly thankful that deliverance was at hand, and believed it to be God’s will that he should escape from the results of his transgression.



CHAPTER IV

"Yet fain the mind its anguish would forego—
Spread then, historic Muse, thy pictured scroll ;
Bid thy great scenes in all their splendour glow,
And swell to thought sublime the exalted soul."
BEATTIE.

TWO years passed by, and Spain no longer knew the Jesuits. Convents in ruins, convents made into barracks, and convents whose darkened windows looked sadly inwards on the past, were all that remained to tell of them.

Up to a certain evening, which was destined to mark a crisis in the young priest's spiritual life Manuel had been living in something not unlike a fool's paradise.

First and foremost was his calling as a priest—that before all things.

Yet there was one episode in his life which had never been confessed, and Manuel thought that he might keep it apart like a secret treasure trove, which one is loth to surrender and peeps at every night by candle-light when other eyes are closed.

His relations with Teresa had lasted just long enough to leave him half intoxicated. One month more might have brought satiety, disillusionment, freedom.

Manuel parted from Teresa, not because his love for her was weak, but because his devotion to his faith was still greater. Believing in the Christ, Manuel could understand no compromise. He must devote

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his every moment to His service, let others do what they might. He gave himself up with fervour, almost with passion, and at that critical period of his life, even woman's love could not dissuade him from his purpose.


Still, Manuel saw that God had given human love to man below as a kind of temporary solatium whilst waiting for paradise, and he acknowledged to himself that the solatium was great, and that human love was passing sweet.

Poor fool! Without clearly understanding what he did, he was trying to reconcile this human love with his duty as a priest. It seemed to him that he might love this woman to his heart's content, so long as they did not meet each other day by day as man and wife. Had she been able to read and write, he would have corresponded with her in secret. His parting with her was woe unutterable. Outside the cottage he had fallen upon his knees and had seen in the heavens a smiling acknowledgment of this sacrifice. Under no other conditions could he have left her; glory, riches, fame, all had been unavailing.

Thus Manuel left Spain with a darling romance hugged closely to his heart. The episode had lent that feature of a mysterious and hopeless love which nine young priests out of ten would fain have written in their biographies—only that in Manuel's case it was very real.

And there still lurked in Manuel's brain a dim, unfashioned hope of something still to come, some final reconciliation of his duty to his Creator with his duty to the woman.

Many a time and oft he would pause to think of Teresa, to assure himself of her constancy, of her



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appreciation of their relations in exactly the same light whereby he himself had seen them. When Manuel, on his knees in Guipúzcoa at the hour of the Angelus, prayed for Teresa, his spirit whispered to him that Teresa on her knees in Santa Fe was praying for Manuel. He knew little of women, and of women such as Teresa scarcely anything at all.

The monks of Loyola de Guipúzcoa were the last to leave Spain, and Manuel was even last amongst the rearguard. He wrote a farewell letter to Antonio, and that impetuous person sent word that he would come to Santander to bid him God-speed.

Nearly two years had passed since the brothers had met, and Antonio, living in Madrid in a whirl of gaiety, had almost forgotten the young priest. Without definitely conceiving the news that Antonio was to bring him, Manuel, from the moment that he heard the mournful creak of the great doors of Loyola as they closed on the last Jesuit, hurried to the rendezvous brimful of anticipation. The nearer the diligence brought him to Santander, the more did he glow with an ill-suppressed eagerness, and this eagerness was none the less thrilling for the fact that his conscience pricked him.

It was in the side room of a little Fonda that Antonio awaited Manuel. It was winter time, and the traveller, having just supped, was standing with his back to the open hearth in front of the empty plates and dishes, his cloak thrown over one arm and his gloves in the other hand.

After they had greeted one another very heartily, Manuel sat down beside the cheerful fire and asked "the latest news."

"Well," said Antonio, considering for a few moments

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and looking at a crack in the tiles between his feet, "Santa Fe became too warm for me."

Manuel raised his eyebrows.

"Lawsuits about this, about that, and about the other, and every one of them goes against me, chico."

"What sort of lawsuits?"

"Disputes about boundaries, raised on the most frivolous pretexts; disputes about cattle, which are said to have broken down fences and eaten more corn in an hour than the cavalry of Napoleon ate in a couple of years; disputes about taxes—— You know the old story, how a war of vengeance is carried on."

"And what have you done that they should persecute you thus?"

"What? You ask me that? You, a *Jesuit*?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Because," said Antonio stolidly, "I am persecuted for being one of you."

"Oh—h!" said Manuel, looking at him, and was silent for a while. Then he rose from his chair, and, confronting Antonio with a smile of amusement—

"What," he asked, "have you done besides?"

"Eh?" said Antonio, falling back a pace.

"My memory is not very clear about it," continued Manuel, "but I fancy that I remember hearing of some good lady or other—was it not a countess?—whom you treated very shabbily in Santa Fe. Or is that merely part of the persecution?"

Antonio strode up to the window, and looked out for a few moments with a grin, his hands clasped behind him; then, striding back, he kicked the logs together with his heel and sent a lusty blaze leaping up the chimney.

"Of course," said he, with a knowing smile, "had



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I been a young Jesuit priest, I had been safe from such aspersions."

Manuel winced and grew serious. After a brief silence he put the question which had been upon the tip of his tongue since he stepped across the threshold. He spoke quietly, gazing at the fire, clenching his hands and trying to control his voice.

And Antonio broke the news to him of the most extensive practical joke that he had yet evolved. Not until the Jesuit fell back into his seat with his face ashen white and a quivering of horror upon his lips and hands did his brother realize that the news would be unwelcome. Then, for the first time in his life, Antonio lost his impudence.

"I am sorry for you, little brother of my soul, indeed I am sorry. I would not have wronged you for worlds. It is partly my cursed misunderstanding of you that has led me on. I thought you would be glad for us to be rid of her. But there! ¿Qué vamos á hacer? The girl was a saucy wanton. Nay! don't flinch; you must have the whole truth now—but I say you must. In self-defence I tell it you. And the truth is this. It was she who egged me on, just as she tempted you, she tempted me, lad, and——"

The Jesuit rose in his wrath, and extending his right arm, pointed at Antonio.

"Valiant embodiment of guilelessness! Companion of harlots, is *thine* the accusing tongue? Who-soever should have told me that Antonio had innocence to lose or guilt to learn, I had struck him that instant upon his lying face to make him learn to blush."

The other shrugged his shoulders as one who resigns his flesh to well-deserved chastisement. But his eyes flashed somewhat and his cheeks were very pale. He

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beat his left hand with the gloves that he held in his right, and slowly made reply.

"That may be—as it may. Look at the matter dispassionately. You entered the Company of Jesus. You intend to take the final vows. You will be dead to the world, you are almost dead to it already. Had you married Teresa and then died, the law of our country allows me, your brother, to take your widow to wife. Save for the mere formality of wedding ceremonies, and the most gratifying fact that your death has merely been legal instead of actual, this is all that has occurred. I have married your widow."

"You have not even married her! You lie!"

"Enough of 'lies'! You are father to her first-born, and"—tossing his gloves and catching them again—"I to her second. You have yourself to blame. You threw me into company with a very comely young woman, you caused me to masquerade as her lover, and—¡caracoles! what would you? I was never hard-hearted. What a fool you are, to be sure! Why, bless your soul, I had just as good cause to be dying of jealousy as you, more so. But do you think I care? Not I! Not that much!"

And he turned his empty wine bottle upside down and drained the lees upon the floor.

"What are you saying?" asked Manuel, with his head between his hands and his eyes very bloodshot.

"Saying?"

"Aye! Why should *you* be jealous?"

"Oh, nothing! Save that she has treated me as she treated you, chico!"

"What?"

"Yes! And for a common fisherman, too. An animal, look you, with bare brown calves and naked

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feet. A mere puller in of nets and sorter out of sprats and herrings. Before I had left Santa Fe a month they told me this had come to pass. And what did I say? Turn pale and drop my jaw and mutter curses? Nay! Leave that to Jesuits! I just turned to and laughed."

And here he gave his listener a specimen of laughing that made the very rafters vibrate again, and another log fell over in the fire.

But Manuel looked upon him in horror. He was suffering acutely. His pretty dream of love had brought a deadly sting. This was a punishment that he never had foreseen.

All the pangs and twinges that an ordinary lover would feel upon hearing of his darling's seduction by another man were his. The merciless lash of jealousy, of ignominy, of mockery, had fallen upon the young priest and left him quivering.

Yet if foolish Antonio thought to console him by pointing at Teresa's surrender to a third and more humble lover, he was mistaken. Indeed, Antonio's effort to show that Teresa had promptings which, bred in the bone, must come out in the flesh, not only failed to exonerate him in his brother's eyes, but drew down upon him fresh revilement.

Manuel paced the room with feverish tread and spoke his mind right freely. But his voice was cracked, and at times died away in a choking sob, then grew hoarse and firm, then wavered away again.

Yet he said not a word in judgment of the woman. In the first place, he declared that her fall was due entirely to himself, for had he not abandoned her to her fate and entrusted her to a profligate? Then he went on to show that Teresa, disgusted with his desertion of her, had surrendered to Antonio in pique, and that,

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disgusted, in turn, with Antonio's desertion of her, she had surrendered to a third. And in this he partly spoke the truth.

The Jesuit's bearing of his first and lightest cross was not without dignity, and though he rapped out many bitter terms upon Antonio, he measured the same amount out for himself. At length he demanded what provision had been made for the girl.

"Let me speak plainly," said Manuel; "not for my sake, but for hers. Were I not a priest, you would be many thousands of golden ounces less rich than you are at present. I demand, as my right, that out of this extra portion you should make her a full allowance. Give her such yearly pension as will keep her and her children in comfort, and—out of temptation."

Antonio, with a very good semblance of injured innocence, turned on him reproachfully.

"That," said he, "is already provided for, and handsomely. Dost thou think I am *all* badness, little brother of my soul, because thou art so godly?"

And when Manuel seemed satisfied with this answer, Antonio began wondering how he might send a little money to Teresa in substantiation of his word, lest he be found out. At length he fell to whistling and balancing the empty bottle upon his forefinger, and every time that Manuel turned his back he would thrust his tongue into his cheek and wink at the cheerful blaze upon the hearth, that being the only element which seemed to him sympathetic.

After a while the Jesuit grew calmer, and, instead of further revilement, bethought him of a passage which asks, "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"



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It was in the cold dawn of a winter's morning that the merchantman which was to carry away the last Jesuit drew off from the quay side. Manuel, on deck, waved his farewell to Antonio, and tried to smile. Then, in the seclusion of his cabin, with blocks and tackle still rattling overhead and a deep gloom on the water outside the portholes, the exile wept bitter tears.

Manuel had never learned that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, nor, hearing it, would he have believed.

That day was a turning point in his career. He sought in this, as he sought in everything, the divine will that directed the divine hand, and he concluded that it was God's chastisement for his levity in turning aside from following Him.

He opened a Bible, and turning over the pages at hazard, his overstrung mood caused him to wonder greatly that the passages which first caught his eye should be so apposite. The first text that stood out in bold relief was that concerning Mammon, and he saw that by the substitution of womankind for Mammon, the words might be intended for himself. "No servant can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." This, to his keen imagination, seemed like a pleading from on high, a reproach, a sorrowful remonstrance.

Then some quick passion overcast the face of this jealous God, for Manuel's hand opened the Bible a hundred pages further on, and a voice thundered at him, "The wages of sin is death."

Wretched and overwhelmed, he tremulously closed the book, and re-opened it among the earlier chapters, in hope of finding them less wrathful. Straightway

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there stood before his aching eyes this passage: "Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour."

He read the words in grief and consternation. The latter portion of this threat had been consummated. It therefore held his attention, and in bitterness he thought he realized that the very God was speaking to him from between the sacred pages.

As for the former portion, as yet he hardly saw that it was intended for him, neither did he comprehend how it might be fulfilled.

Even his reading of the ten or twelve verses that followed did not suggest a development which Manuel had never even dreamt of. As yet he had not felt any keen longing to look upon his child. The love was there, but it was hidden, and needed confronting with the substance for its awakening.

From that day Manuel convinced himself that there was only one kind of love which might not end in bitterness, the love of his God.

Arrived at Antwerp, he passed inland to the home of the Jesuits near Ghent (for when has Belgium spurned them?), and here the sensitive plant seemed to shrivel up for all human ties and instincts, opening out its petals only in the silent beams of that unutterable glory which poured down into his chamber when others were asleep.

By day, he would often linger in that part of the dark cloisters nearest to the chapel, kneeling at a point where the swelling of the organ and the voices of the choir at practice were softened only by the oaken panels that stood between. As the organ rose, so swelled the heart of Manuel towards his God, and thus,

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without speaking, gazing only at the dark vaulted roof above and clasping his hands, he felt so carried away by his emotions that surely, he thought, his soul was communing with the Most High.

But such devotion, yearning for the concrete, must in the end personify the Godhead. God, as the Awful Creator, allowed no such personification, but God as the Saviour became his all-absorbing theme, and he could only realize these deities apart. For the Father he had a reverential awe, yet he felt that it was the Father Who had angrily rebuked him. To the Saviour he rendered all the enthusiastic homage of his warm nature, fearing no rebukes, sure of His sympathy, rejoicing in His love. There were nights when the young priest was upon his knees by the open casement for hours together, his hands folded across his bosom, silent and entranced. He seemed to see many things, Jacob's ladder, the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove, but above all things he saw one central Figure, with radiant face and outstretched hands, on the Lake of Galilee, stilling the tempest, standing in the Garden of Gethsemane, and always with His face towards Manuel.

Human love, he told himself, had gone out of his life for ever. It was insufficient.

"The gusts of appetite, the clouds of care,
And storms of disappointment all o'erpast,
Henceforth no earthly hope with Heaven shall share
This heart where peace serenely shines at last."

He did not, however, ask himself if the new order of things would always be sufficient. He assured himself with confidence that all thought of human ties and affections had been banished from his heart,

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that he had foresworn them as was bidden to the rich young man who came asking of the Saviour what he must do to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

He appeared to become whole hearted in the service of the Company, and devoted his great intelligence to their welfare, and, after a few more years had passed, there was not a single member of that great fraternity who stood higher in favour than did Manuel. He had a genius for expressing himself in either French or Spanish, and he even wrote well in Latin. A congratulatory address, a farewell testimonial, a record of some great festival, an appeal to some great sovereign, was never so polished, so sympathetic, or so speaking, as when entrusted to Manuel. In time his convent became famous throughout France and Belgium for this one thing, and whenever the sister colleges had any such project in hand, they would say, "Let us sketch out the main idea, and send it on to Ghent for elaboration." And they would send the raw material to Ghent. After a week or two, lo ! it would come back made into a marvel, beautifully written on parchment, illuminated at every initial letter with gold, azure and vermilion ; but this was the least remarkable thing about it. The delighted monks would find that Manuel had not only read the words they sent him, he had read much more, and here were such graceful expressions, set forth so appealingly and with al simplicity, that they wondered how these thoughts of theirs could have been conveyed.

But there was always a something about the young Jesuit which might best be described as a failure to confine his ideas within his task. True, half his attention to this daily routine was worth the whole attention of many others, yet there is some dire spirit of



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retribution that hovers in the wake of such slighted duties. Duty, it would seem, calls for a different degree of fulfilment from each man, according to his powers.

And there were some who thought that Manuel's character was too impressionable, too susceptible to human influence, for his attainment of that high ideal of perfected Jesuitism which must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. This they perceived by instinct, without knowing one jot or tittle of certain things which Manuel had never confessed.

By a special dispensation of the General, he was enabled to take the four vows at an earlier age than obtains in the majority of cases.

CHAPTER V

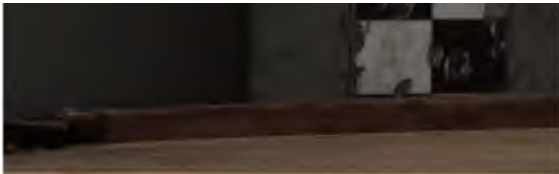
"This casket threatens."

The Merchant of Venice.

THE village of Cinco Caminos lies but a mile from Santa Fe. Between the two places the officials of the "consumo" have their shelter and their scales. Being outside the consumo, the taverns of Cinco Caminos can sell as good a copita of aguardiente for one penny as could be purchased in Santa Fe for twopence-halfpenny. Other commodities are also cheaper, though not in this proportion, and thus it is that the village, with these advantages and its fishing trade, keeps up a chequered existence.

Sometimes at sunset one would meet a string of ox-carts, with the beasts goaded into a clumsy gallop in order to pass the consumo before the prohibited hours of darkness. Those carters who failed to get weighed and checked in time were forced to sit down alongside the hut until the morrow, [an infliction which they bore with a shrug of the shoulders and an exchange of cigarettes with others equally unfortunate.

Having passed the consumo and the cross road leading down to the sea (the most squalid road of the village, inhabited only by fisher folk), the first thing one noticed was the barber's shop, just eastward of the church, with a blue and white striped curtain across the doorway, and a pole from which dangled a miniature shaving dish of brass.



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Painted over the window was an inscription reading—

“Here leeches are sold and hair is cut.”

Lizards peeped through the green lattice and listened to the gossip from within. Sometimes they were unsavoury anecdotes that the lizards heard, in which case they would change colour and scuttle away.

Next came a cobbled space with some twenty acacias, five a side, and behind it the little yellow church of San Pablo.

Nearly opposite to the church was the schoolmaster's house, and from its scorching balconies one might hear the monotonous buzz of the children of an afternoon repeating scriptural verses after their weary teacher.

Sometimes the lesson would be interrupted by the misbehaviour of a pupil, or the voice of the master would be heard exclaiming, “Pepe, wipe thy nose and try to understand,” or “Lolita, take thy fist out of thy mouth, for it blocks the way to thy little comprehension.”

The next house was that of the village priest, the ground floor being tenanted by a deaf and dumb cobbler.

Then came the mayor's house, then a short space along the dusty road, and, last of all, the Fonda del Trini.

Overlooking this village stands the Jesuit College of Santa Fe, nestling half way up the hill. From its deserted terraces one may gain an impressive view of the fertile vale beneath.

Amongst other moving objects in the landscape is a group of women with bundles on their heads. They

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are returning from the river Guadalote with their burdens of washed-out clothes, having tramped eight miles or more along dusty roads in a scorching sun, and all for sixpence a day! To-night, by moonlight or some other borrowed light—for they cannot afford a candle of their own—they must needs be ironing the clothes that the hungry children have been drying on the beach opposite the village all day long.

To the left, and towards the sugar factory, descends a pathway, fenced in with pita or aloe, and what with the deep blue of the sky and sea, the light greenish blue of the aloe, the red ironstone of the loftier hills behind, and the sugary emerald carpet down yonder in the vega, there are contrasts enough to make the duller eye look brighter.

Lifting one's glance over the intermediate hills of red ironstone chequered by clumps of olive trees and dwarf palms, the ridge of higher mountains, blue as the bloom of a plum, rises in the far distance, gloomy, silent, impenetrable, its summit capped with snow.

As one wheels suddenly round to look at these mountains, they seem to smile grimly as though they would say, "What! At last you have noticed us! We could have waited for centuries!"

Standing here, one becomes conscious of the perfume of orange blossom. Whence does it come? Look far down into the vega. Hard by the bridge across the Guadalote stands a finca surrounded by palm trees and orchards. So clear is the trembling air, one may see that the trees are covered with snow-white bloom.

The scent of orange blossoms is borne to one on the wind over a distance of fully two miles, and the Moor has wondered that this odour should carry farther



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than any other, and has used it to symbolize the presence of his love.

This is the vale of Santa Fe, and those who look upon it from the hill top can only cast themselves upon the ground to dream, and ever go on dreaming, with the chirp of the cigarrón, the far-off murmur along the beach, the tearing of weeds by the goats that graze beneath and the fitful bursting into song of a muleteer down yonder on the king's highway, heard yet unheard. All blends itself, Life is whispering her love dream, Sleep, all smiling, pushes her aside for a brief moment, stoops down and kisses the idler, folding him in her arms.

* * * * *

On a certain evening, some three or four years later than the visit of Antonio to Manuel, the villagers of Cinco Caminos who chanced to be standing near the little parish church of San Pablo, which building is the personification of plainness and poverty, bedaubed with yellow ochre and cracked in every wall, were surprised by the sudden clamouring of a fisherman at the door of the priest's cottage just in front of them. Shortly after admitting this visitor the good priest came hurrying out, crossed over to the miserable barn-like church, and was followed by an acolyte, whom the fisherman had also summoned from lower down the village.

These ominous signs drew together some score of loiterers, who wagged their heads to one another as if they knew what they portended.

Presently there arose the tinkling of a little bell, the men whipped off their caps, and all bystanders, young and old, sank upon their knees in the dusty road, crying, "His Majesty! His Majesty!"

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A stranger looking around him would have seen no king whatever, but he would have noticed that the priest and acolyte, attended by a younger boy, all three in robes, came sweeping out of the church door and past the dusty acacias, into the road beyond.

The acolyte bore a tiny custodia of silver, shaped like a temple, in which was a consecrated wafer. The boy swung incense.

They bent their steps towards a wretched little cottage at the bottom of the village street which led down to the sea.

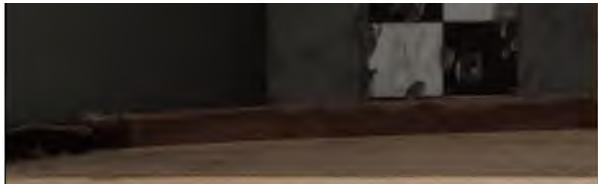
This street was filthy with offal of every kind, but principally with the guts and heads of fish. The dust was thickly interspersed with herring bones and scales, from which the fierce sunshine evoked a noisome stench, and occasionally a slatternly wife, with tucked-up petticoat and bare feet and calves, would poke her head of matted hair outside and shoot another bucketful to keep the stink from perishing.

Little brown-skinned naked children rolled in the dust outside the cottage doors, pelted the fowl, rode on the pigs, and cried when anything touched them on their sores, of which indeed they had a goodly harvest.

Arrived at the lowest cottage in the street, the priest first entered alone, the others standing upon the threshold.

On a wretched wooden bench there was a straw mattress, and upon the mattress Teresa lay dying.

Two little urchins of boys, whimpering very hard, were removed by the same fisherman who had come to summon the priest, and, having received a hearty cuff apiece, were shot, like any other rubbish, out into the street, where they straightway fell upon their



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dirty little knees, in imitation of the people round the threshold. The elder wiped his nose with his cap, the younger, having no cap, performed this operation with his arm, and both of them went on blubbering without further interference.

Meanwhile, inside the cottage, the priest was bending his head down over the dying woman and listening to her last confession. Fever had wasted her cheeks and limbs, and her eyes appeared large in their sockets. Her face was overspread with the ghastly pallor of death.

After a brief confession, put forth with many pauses and gaspings, with clutching at the mattress and with staring eyes, she became insensible. The priest was just about to beckon to the acolyte when the woman opened her eyes, plucked him feverishly by the robe, and bade him bend down closer, whereupon she said—

“My son!”

“Which son?” asked the priest.

“The elder one.”

“What is your wish, my daughter?”

“When he reaches an age of discretion—if he can ever read—bend closer!”

The priest lowered his ear until it almost grazed the lips of the dying woman, whose glassy eyes stared anxiously towards the door, then focussed themselves upon the far distance and gazed through the narrow embrasure, with two iron cross bars, which served as a window.

After a moment's pause, Teresa collected what remained of her ebbing senses, and whispered—

“In the orchard beside the well where I used to wash the clothes—for the alcalde—under the stones!”

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These words, not bearing any obvious sequel, the priest continued listening, though for a long spell he heard nothing but the ticking of his own watch, the laboured breathing of the sick woman, and the whimpering of the children outside. Presently Teresa continued—

“One stone, a very big one—under it a casket—in it is something—a great secret in writing—that may be worth a fortune—when—he—is——”

Here she broke off again and stared vacantly.

“When he is a man, eh?” completed the priest, raising his head and regarding her.

The woman turned her awful eyes upon him for a moment; then, with one last effort, sat up and raised a piercing scream which was audible right down along the sea shore, and was answered by a yell from the kneeling children outside, and a tremulous “¡Ay!” from the fisher folk round the doorstep.

Throwing up her arms, Teresa fell back insensible, and never uttered another sound.

The priest beckoned to the acolyte, who brought in the host, which shortly was administered.

Then, after a brief prayer, the acolyte stepped forward, and, looking into the woman’s mouth to see if the consecrated wafer had been swallowed, asked in a loud voice, according to ancient custom, “Has His Majesty passed?”

The wafer having passed and the ceremony being concluded, the priest went out.

Shortly afterwards the death rattle was heard in Teresa’s throat, and within twenty-four hours the parish coffin was filled with another ghastly burden, and this burden having been cast into a shallow grave some eight inches below the surface, the coffin was



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removed by night and reserved for the next occasion.

And in pronouncing the burial service the good priest smoked a cigarette, not from any feeling that was callous or irreverent, but simply because the graves were all of them very shallow, the wall niches badly closed, and the sun exceeding hot.

When the priest was seated at his frugal meal that evening by moonlight—for the moon was very full and his purse was very empty—he recollected that this poor woman had caused no little sensation a few years ago, when she was yet in better circumstances and clad in silk and satin.

It is, or used to be, a common enough thing in those parts for women to offer up their first-born upon the altar. The child was not of course sacrificed, but merely dedicated, the Christ being prayed to accept him living or dead. In this might be seen a curious grafting of popular religion or superstition upon the orthodox faith. The priests opposed this act in many cases and kept watch against it.

Once, late at night, Teresa, having bribed the verger, was found holding on to the great altar in the Cathedral of Santa Fe, her face transfigured, her eyes riveted upon the Saviour's face, which was feebly lighted by two candles upon the reading desk.

The child was seated upon the altar, his wondering eyes staring into the pall of darkness around him.

The Saviour and the woman seemed to be regarding each other intently, and those who happened upon this midnight picture declared that the lips of the image had moved as if in answer to the suppliant's dedication.

Who can say what feelings swayed the poor girl,



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what words she spoke, or whether her offer would be accepted?

Yet the incident goes to prove that Teresa was not altogether bad, nor as reckless as Antonio had painted her.

CHAPTER VI

"What hidest thou in thy treasure caves and cells,
Thou hollow sounding and mysterious main?
Pale glistening pearls, and rainbow-coloured shells,
Bright things which gleam unrecked of and in vain."

F. D. HEMANS.

THE two boys who were cast out from the death-chamber of Teresa were her children. When they had cried their fill, they fell asleep, and on the morrow they woke up hungry.

The fisherman who had been angry at their whimpering was not wilfully cruel to them. Indeed, considering the hardness of his life, his scanty earnings, and his long hours of labouring at the nets, he was rather a tolerant foster-father. It must be remembered that the law could not oblige him to shelter them at all, though maybe the tribunal of village opinion, added to the influence of the priest, counted for much in his consenting to give them shelter. As time went on the children became more useful.

They would scour the dirty floor and boil the earthen pipkin, fetch water from the village fountain in the cobbled square beneath the acacias, and they even made shift to cook the wretched meals, though this required but little knowledge. For who cannot boil chickpeas and fry sprats upon a skewer? A big haul of fish would sometimes mean a lump of bacon fat to boil with the chickpeas and cabbage, though more

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often it melted into spirituous vapour, and left not a rack behind.

When they grew older the boys were of greater service at the fishing than in the house, and the fisherman, taking unto himself a new lady-love, in whose sight they found little favour, their lot in life was even harder than before.

Their foster father did not quite forget them. He was the Notary (or *Escribano*) of his boat, and he arranged with the proprietor (or *Patrón*) that the elder of the two should assist the carrier with his donkeys in carrying fish to market. This lad was called *El Chopo*, and he soon learned to manage his rat-tailed donkey, waiting on the beach with fishy panniers to receive his portion of the incoming netful; then, loaded with sprats still wriggling, off he would gallop to the old Moorish market-place of *Santa Fe*. The younger child was nicknamed *El Peláo*, for he had lost a patch of hair on one side of his head. It was his business, when the net, with its leaping, quivering mass of sprats was pulled inshore, to pounce upon the host of little fish that wriggled through the meshes, and to gather them in a basket for washing in the surf and placing in the panniers, and in this way many pounds of fish were recovered every time the net came shivering in. When the sea yielded fat harvests the lads had enough to eat, and sometimes the *Patrón* would even fling them a copper each as he stood at the door of his hut with well-lined belly and smoking a cigarette, his face all flushed with *aguardiente*. But in winter, when fish was scarce and the sea was rough, they went hungry, at times for days together, and were driven to rummaging in the garbage. If they complained, the fishermen would fling a stone at them. At such

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times, when El Chopo, the elder, found Peláo whimpering, he would feel so troubled for his brother as to forget his own pangs, and would yield him whatever wretched morsel he could find. Summer-time was not so bad, for if fish were not forthcoming, there were plenty of orchards to be robbed, ears of maize to pluck and boil, and even prickly pears.

Having mentioned that the boys' foster father was a Notary, I may have given you the impression that he was learned. On the contrary, he could not read or write. What is more, he could not tell the time, and had you asked him, "What o'clock is it?" he would have squinted at the sun and said, perhaps, "three sticks!" meaning that the sun was three masts high in the heavens, looking from the prow of a falucha with the sun above the poop.

Brown-faced, brown-legged, with breeches reaching only to the knees and a band of white calico extending the breeches some three or four inches lower, this swarthy toiler of the deep could not tell B from a bull's foot.

He wore a broad-brimmed hat with a round peaked crown, and, whenever the boat was painted, the hats of the crew were painted also. In fact, you might know what boat a man belonged to by the colour of his hat.

Not only did each boat carry a Notary, but it was served, in addition, by several chiefs of departments, whose offices bore titles in a patois of Arabic-Andaluz, the more important¹ being the chief skipper (Mandaor), the prowman (Prové), the sounder (Calaor), the helmsman (Popé), the block greaser and assistant to the skipper (Amocáe), the netsman (Alargaor), who squats

¹ But the following are recognized officials also: *El Espardé, El Espachapanda, El Cruyé, El Mediané, El Sotamediané, El Cuartelero, El Arrael, El Vendeor, and La Posadera.*

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over the rolled-up net, pulling it into the boat or paying it out, and a few Porrinos (assistants of general art) ; that is to say, in plain English, handy men.

I must not neglect the complement ashore, for it included El Chopo and Peláo, and was headed by the second skipper (Segundo Mandaor). Here also was the carrier (Malagie) waiting with his donkeys to bear the fish to market, and his assistant, El Chopo, generally stood beside him.

To take them on one of many mornings, Peláo is squatting beside the net mender (Sotarraí), and before them stands the swabber (Corullé). The two basket captains (Patrónes de Canasta), are helping the Porrinos, flotsam and jetsam of Santa Fe, who enter into no formal bond or contract with the proprietor, but have a right, like all comers, to pull on the ropes and take their miserable share of the results.

On the top of the shingly bank sits El Chopo beside his donkey, the donkey lying down, the lad's brown arm thrown round his neck, the sun sweltering down on both of them. He is looking far out to sea, far beyond the distant faluchas and goatskins, far beyond the horizon. Beside him squat the coilers (Gardónes), whose duty it is to coil the ropes and nets up neatly as the Porrinos pull them in towards the top of the bank. They have just finished stowing the net away at the bottom of the boat, 120 fathoms of net and 1,600 fathoms of rope.

The crew and the Porrinos put their shoulder to the boat, which is prowed like a gondola, and has an eye painted on either bow. Without this eye no fisherman would put off from shore, for the boat must be allowed to see, and it has been so painted ever since the time of the Phœnicians.



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The boat now slides along greasy baulks of timber and flops into the water, rocking and rolling as though it were excited. Along the bows are hanging inflated goatskins, to be used as net buoys. The bare-legged crew paddle in after the boat and jump aboard.

The Sounder now hands one end of the rope to the Porrinos ashore, then they push off.

The proprietor, a fat, clean-shaven man with coarse lips, clothed like the fishermen, but somewhat more newly, and with bare legs and arms like theirs, returns to his hut and aguardiente.

This hut is made of old boxes, canes, and canvas. By the door flourish one or two banana trees ; in their shadow is lying a donkey—the whole, a pretty picture.

To return to the boat, however, the Prowman now stands in the prow, and hands a goatskin to the Sounder at every 320 fathoms, watching the rope and the cork floats that are spaced in between the goatskins.

The Sounder peers into the water, estimates the distance of the bottom, and points out the direction of the tide, in which matters he is a specialist.

The net must be drifted with the tide, else it would roll over and over, or even lie in zig-zags. If the watchful skipper suspects that the net is badly disposed, he waves his hat, and the Porrinos ashore begin to pull, which tightens the rope and straightens out the net.

When first the net is cast into the water, these honest fishermen all take off their caps, and bowing their black heads, cry in chorus, "May it please Our Lady La Virgen del Carmen that we kill a great multitude of fish."

This, I admit, is very pretty. Yet, alas ! if you heard what they say (which God forbid !) whenever the net comes empty !

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El Chopo, when he saw the heads all bowed in prayer out yonder in the boat, would sweep off his own dirty cap, and make shift to pray as best he could. Yet when the nets came in badly filled, or empty, he never joined in the blasphemous outcry of his elders, and always looked surprised at them. It seemed to him illogical. If it be a favour on the part of the Virgen del Carmen to put fish into the net, surely, thought he, it cannot be an injury on her part to abstain from this good deed. In this, as in many things, he differed from those around him.

After making a long circuit the vessel heads for the shore, and, on arrival, the sea being calm, the crew desert her, throwing down anchor and leaping ashore with the other end of the rope. You must now imagine the net disposed in the form of a letter **U**, 1,600 fathoms long. The two ends of this letter **U** are being hauled ashore by two separate groups of Porrinos, with one or two hundred yards of shingle in between them.

Each Porrino has a six-foot length of grass cord, with a light weight at the end. He slings the weighted end across the net rope with such dexterity that the cord tightens on itself. Turning his back to the sea, he pulls this cord over his shoulder and leans at the angle of greatest effect, sometimes forty-five degrees, holding on to the end with both hands upon his chest, and burying his toes in the shingle to gain good hold.

"Come, thou!" shouts the foremost Porrino to Peláo, and Peláo picks up a cord and comes lazily forward to help. "Come, thou!" shouts another to El Chopo. But the lad is buried in his reflections, and does not hear.

At first the rope scarcely seems to budge, and these two groups of patient men, staring hard at the pebbles,



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silent, and red in the neck, have no more visible effect than so many flies. Gradually, however, the net begins to move, and slowly the men plod up the bank to where the coilers are beginning to coil the rope, each making use of the foothold that the others have left behind.

As time goes on the rope comes in faster, until at length it is only a five minutes' journey for each Porrino, from the time when he paddles in the water's edge and hitches on his cord, to the moment when he throws it off, just as he reaches the coiler, and runs back down the incline, twirling his cord and shouting, "¡ Ya viene !—Already it comes !"

Look seawards.

The Mediterranean is calm to-day—sometimes it is smooth as glass—and you can see a few large black dots, like flies on a mirror, lying in a curve and moving slowly landwards. These are the goat-skins. In between them are smaller dots. These are the corks.

Patiently the two bands of haulers toil up the bank ; now a Porrino runs seawards, shading his eyes to see if the fish are jumping, hitches on his cord, and hides his face. In time the rope comes in yet quicker ; the Porrinos commence to sing.

At this sound the skipper, the prowman, the sounder, and the helmsman come out of the little hut by the banana trees, wiping their mouths with their salt and hairy brown arms. Some go to one end of the rope, some to the other.

The Porrinos are working still faster ; the journey is reduced to three minutes ; each shouts "¡ Ya viene ! ¡ Ya viene !" as he splashes into the water and begins to haul ; the others grunt "¡ Ya viene !" with what breath they have to spare, and look down at the pebbles with purple faces.

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Now expectation is written on the faces of the boat's crew, who stand ankle deep in the water and shade their eyes, looking out at the sun-speckled sea.

At last!

The first few meshes of the net begin to come in.

"¡ Ya viene! ¡ Ya viene! "

The Sounder and Prowman take hold and dexterously sling the net round and round the rope, pulling off the jellyfish and starfish.

Already several goatskins have been unhitched and cast ashore. The **U** has grown smaller and much narrower. It is now more like a hairpin. The two groups of haulers are only a few yards apart.

Faster and faster comes in the net.

Out comes the fat Patrón from his hut, strolls down the beach with his hands behind his back, then rests them on his hips as he stands beside the ropes intent upon the narrowing space enclosed between the corks. The Porrinos' song grows louder. This is what they sing—

" For the Prowman takes the tunny fish,
And the Sounder takes the bream;
The Notary fills his pockets full,
The Skipper he takes the cream.
When every one of the others
Hath something got for his cheek,
The Porrino takes ten cents away,
And a hole torn out of his breek.

(*Extra loud*) And a hole torn out of his breek."¹

¹ Another version runs—

" El Mandaor se lleva los pulpos
El Prové los calamares y pijotas
Y los *proves* porrinos de tierra
Sacan la chaqueta rota.
Sacan la chaqueta rota-a-a-a."

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"Ah," says the Patrón, with his sulky eyes fixed upon the corks, "and to-day 'tis only the last ye'll get, I'm thinking!"

Whereupon he lets loose a frightful oath at the expense of Our Lady La Virgen del Carmen.

"Nay," says the skipper, as two or three seagulls swoop down towards the net, squealing like ungreased pulley blocks, "yonder come the birds."

"Aye!" returns the Patrón after a pause, during which the enclosure grows rapidly smaller, and corks and nets fly landward at a running pace. "You are right! Blessed be Our Lady La Virgen del Carmen!"

"Blessings on her!" echo the Porrinos.

Within three minutes the enclosed strip of water is lashed by a myriad of panic-stricken fish, and looks like boiling quicksilver. The seagulls fly screaming over the agitated surface. Ever and anon some artful card leaps right over the rope into the expanse beyond, but many are caught in the act by the eager seagulls, who heed the fishermen as little as the fishermen heed *them*.

"¡Viva la Virgen del Carmen! May she be blessed!"

"¡Olé! Hurrah for the little lass!"

Some dozen fishermen, tucking their short breeches over their thighs and yelling with excitement, wade into the margin, and, seizing the fine meshes of the Copo, pull it high and dry, hoarse with triumph, for the haul is excellent and will load three or four donkeys.

The carrier comes forward, pulling his donkey, motions to El Chopo, who goes to fetch the third donkey from beside the hut, and comes forward leading a donkey by each hand. A crowd of villagers has collected round the net, but the fluttering of the fish is

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audible above their chatter, and a spray of silver scales goes flying like chaff from every mesh and opening.

Most of the fish are diminutive, and wriggle their lives away in a rapid unceasing vibration, but there are one or two larger fish which leap now and then from beneath the white mass of sprats, like a sudden eruption of some silvery volcano.

Lastly, there are the cuttlefish and jellyfish, which betray no emotion whatever.

The Prowman stands in the middle of the net when opened and picks up basketfuls of fish, handing them to the Basket Captains to bestow them in the donkey panniers.

The Notary keeps an eye upon every load, and notches it on a stick.

One or two of the fish, curiously marked, are rejected by the Prowman, who flings them out to sea at arm's length for being unlucky, which needs must hurt their feelings.

El Chopo, having his panniers both full, jumps upon his donkey, straddle-legged behind the panniers, shouts "¡ Arré !" and off he goes to market.

Peláo is helping to gather in the stragglers.

All the donkeys having gone off, and the net being empty, the coilers take it in hand and the fishermen gather round the Notary.

The ancient method of "cut and come again," whereby each man obtains his share, is beyond the comprehension of our most gifted mathematicians. The only thing that appears clear on the face of it is that the Porrinos come off worst of all, and it has been calculated that if there are thirty hands all told, and the fish only sell for thirty-six reals,



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"The Porrino takes ten cents away,
And a hole torn out of his breech."

Ten cents are less than a penny and the hole is for being saucy !

Yet these brown-skinned ragamuffins knew but little of discontent, and often, when hungriest, would sing a loud song to draw the air out of their poor empty bellies.

Not so El Chopo. He was not contented with the present, yet he was hopeful for the future, with the sanguineness of childhood. He was quiet and uncomplaining, it is true, but he felt that life held something better for him than this. Around him he saw a lovely and rejoicing Nature, yet his lot was very miserable. Why the contrast ?

Sometimes he spoke to the village priest, who, when he could spare him time, told him that the only way to climb the ladder was to be content and humble. And the priest, going home to his wretched bare room, would sigh and shake his head at fickle fortune, thinking of the Bishop and his palace in Santa Fe, or even the Cura of San Lorenzo, who lived on the best of the land and went to the evening tertulias of great ladies.

Those who were much stronger and older than El Chopo called him a "dreamer" and a "monk." His equals, however, had found that his mild eyes could lighten up with a dangerous fire. At such times his aim was unerring, his dreams forgotten, his fist formidable. The lad had a strength of muscle beyond his age. Strange to say, those who remembered poor Teresa in her saucy moods, when they saw the boy like this would point at him and cry, "That is a true son of 'La Chopa.'" And thus he was nick-

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named "El Chopo," which does not mean a "poplar," but a certain kind of fish caught on the coast of Santa Fe.


The lad was blue-eyed, curly-haired, and of fair complexion. His intelligence was irrepressible. Facts that other boys accepted with the trustfulness of youth this youngster dissected, wrestled with, and many times rejected as false.

Hero worship being common to all countries, it is only in the nature of things that El Chopo and Peláo should seek them out a leader. Possibly hero worship was more powerful with Peláo than with his brother, yet in any case, if only for self-preservation, it was necessary for the lads to take one side or other in the contests between the various cliques and factions, of which there were many in Santa Fe.

Their leader, appropriately enough, was nicknamed "El Capitán," and Peláo believed him to be "El Gran Capitán" himself. El Chopo knew better. To him they swore allegiance, and, when stone throwing affrays took place in the dry river bed, it was upon his side they fought and bled and shouted.

El Capitán was several years their senior; in fact, he was a hobbledehoy of seventeen, and was intent upon learning to play an old guitar which had three times been broken and as many times patched up.

There were days when, in spite of a cloudless sky above, the breakers were so heavy as to prevent all laying out or drawing in of nets. This often happens on the coast of Andalucía, as the result, no doubt, of disturbances in the Mediterranean elsewhere. On such occasions the lads would sometimes climb halfway up the hill, and, seated upon a rock overlooking the sea, would hatch blood-curdling con-



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spiracies for the discomfiture of all fisher boys on the other side of Santa Fe.

To the right hand, as far as one could see, lay the fertile vega of Santa Fe, with emerald green sugar canes, among which the eye could trace a network of canals for irrigation.

The floury main road cut the sugar fields in twain as it passed over the river and far into the distance westward and out of sight. At times a little cloud of dust would rise fitfully at some point or other along this road, when the sleeping Zephyr turned him over in his dreams.

El Capitán would bring his guitar with him, and, gazing far out to sea, would soon grow weary of the younger boys' chatter, and would answer them in peevish snatches, whilst he plucked with his faltering fingers at the strings. He was in love with a fisher-girl of Cinco Caminos.

One afternoon the three boys were perched upon the rock until sunset. They held forth thus:—

El Chopo : "What happens to the sun when he sinks into the water?"

Capitán : "He goes out, to be sure."

Peláo : "¡Caracoles! What a hissing he must make!"

El Chopo : "Then how is it that he comes up over the hills again in the morning all alight?"

Capitán : "That is another sun, thickhead!"

El Chopo : "No! It is the same one. I have heard the priest say so."

Capitán : "Fathead! Have you never heard them talk of 'the sun of yesterday' and the 'sun of to-morrow,' and 'the sun of Spain' and 'the sun of France'? Why, every country has its sun, and so has every day."

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(Ten minutes' silence. El Chopo meditative, but not convinced.)

Peláo : "There's seven o'clock sounding from the Cathedral. How the wind blows!"

Capitán : "That's because the demons are shivering up yonder in the hills."

Peláo : "Yes! I know!"

Capitán : "At *Las Ánimas* it will blow much stronger, for then they not only shiver, but gnash their teeth and flap their wings into the bargain."

El Chopo : "I don't believe a word of it."

(Receives a smack across the head with *El Capitán's* guitar, and is silenced by superior force.)

Peláo : "Look yonder! There's a squad of infantry coming along the road from the Guadalupe. What a dust they raise!"

The Guitar : "Plimpety-plimpety-plimp."

Capitán : "My brother is a soldier."

Peláo : "And very valiant, eh?"

Capitán : "I should just think so!"

El Chopo : "What has he done?"

Capitán : "One day he just spitted a Carlist on his bayonet when another Carlist runs at him. My brother makes no more ado but lifts his rifle, with bayonet and Carlist and all, and spits the second Carlist with the ten inches that were left."

Peláo : "¡Jesús!"

The Guitar : "Plimpety-plimp, plimpety-plimp."

Capitán : "That isn't all. Another Carlist charges him. He lifts his rifle to his shoulder with both the dead men spitted on it, and shoots the third one dead as a nail."

El Chopo : "It must have been a very long bayonet."



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Capitán : "No, the Carlists were thinner than fish bones."

El Chopo : "How could he see to aim at the third one?"

Capitán : "Your idiocy surpasses everything! You can do nothing but ask me chuckle-headed questions."

(The squad of infantry marches past the foot of the hill with a cheery "pompety-pompety-pomp" of the bugle, and a strident "plimpety-plimpety-plimp" of the guitar. The boys watch them disappear towards Santa Fe, the cloud of dust gradually settling in their wake.)

El Chopo : "Look what a red glare the sun has left behind it, and how it shines along the crests of the rollers."

Peláo : "Yes. It looks like a roadway covered in blood."

El Chopo : "I wonder what is beneath the water!"

Capitán : "Sprats."

El Chopo : "No! I don't mean that. You don't understand. I mean, I wonder what is right down in the dark parts at the bottom, right deep down ever so far."

Capitán : "Eels!"

(El Chopo sighs heavily, and looks pensively out to sea.)

The Guitar : "Plimpety-plimpety-plimp."

Capitán (clears his throat and sings) :

"At one o'clock my mother bore,
Christen'd me in an hour's delay.
At three my vows of love I swore:
At four, it was my wedding day."¹

¹ From the Spanish.

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El Chopo : "It makes me feel very glad, and yet very sad, when I watch the sky at sunset. Everything looks so different somehow, such times. I feel—I feel—I don't know *what*."

Capitán : "That's easily explained" (plimpety-plimp, plimpety-plimp). "If God made you with an empty head, and your stepfather leaves you with an empty belly, ¡caracoles!"

El Chopo : "The priest talks of a person's soul being hungry. How can that be?"

Capitán : "Hungry for consecrated bread, that's what he means."

El Chopo : "But that bread goes down the same way as all other bread."

Capitán : "Sawny! They both go in at the same mouth, but a man's throat has two holes inside. Just because you can't see them!"

(Peláo insists upon holding El Chopo's jaws apart and staring down his throat for no little time, admitting much sea breeze. The guitar continues "plimpety-plimp.")

Peláo (excitedly) : "Yes, yes, I can see it, ¡Jesús! I can see it. Which hole does the ordinary bread go down, Capitán?"

Capitán : "To the left."

Peláo : "And the holy bread?"

Capitán : "To the right."

Peláo : "And do they never go wrong?"

Capitán : "Never!"

El Chopo (coughing violently) : "You've let a lot of dust blow down my throat."

Capitán : "Make the most of it; it's all the supper you'll get to-night."

(*Capitán* sings another verse. The others nurse

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their knees and watch two seagulls which soar down from the hill into the crimson pathway along the ocean, and it seems to El Chopo that they bear with them the last dying cadence of the singer, and carry his voice far out to sea.)

Thus did El Chopo spend his leisure hours. The world was, for him, a vast womb full of marvellous possibilities. Instead of taking everything as a matter of course, he grew into the way of seeking for the cause of each effect, and watching for the effect of every cause.

Naturally his scope was limited, for his intellect, which had the elements of greatness, was as yet untrained. Thus, he never paused to ask why a stone should fall to the ground, nor to argue out the reason why wind should extinguish flame, these appearing to be self-evident facts whose bases did not call for investigation. Yet a thunderstorm kept him pondering for days, and the whispering of the waves in a sea shell was a phenomenon over which he had lain awake for hours and hours.

Nature, in any shape or form, aroused his keenest curiosity, and the distant purple ridge of snow-capped mountains was his mystery of mysteries. The ocean seemed to hold some secret, to laugh at him and bid him find it out.

His one great ambition was to read and write.

He did not envy the rich people their wealth; he merely envied them the great power for acquiring knowledge which their education brought them.

After his fish were disposed of up in Santa Fe, he would sit on the donkey's back with his bare brown legs astride, or both on one side, as the spirit moved him, but always well astern, and would jog along back

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in silent contemplation, scanning the shops and cafés and casting an envious glance at the shadowy portal alongside the Cathedral, where sat the public letter-writer, mending his quills half hidden by a screen.

After the diligence arrived of an evening there was always much selling of newspapers in the principal streets and cafés. Voices would then be upraised in the chemist's and the barber's, one proclaiming the news, others declaiming their comments, the deaf ones wagging their heads to show how close they followed it.

How sad it made El Chopo to watch some loiterer in a window seat beckon to the woman who sold papers and lottery tickets, toss her a penny, and lean back in his chair with a sigh as he opened the oracle to see what had befallen or what was about to befall. Sometimes he bought newspapers himself. Several of the letters he already recognized at sight.

As he grew older the priest would take more notice of him. What did he mean by patting him on the shoulders and saying, "We must learn to read; we must learn to read and write"?

Little he needed such urging if only the chance were given him! But the priest never got any further than suggestions, and he had not the heart to beg lessons from the village schoolmaster of Cinco Caminos, for he knew full well that this learned man lacked sympathy.

And well may a man run short of sympathy who never receives such goods from any external source of replenishment, whose worries are scarcely less numerous than his offspring, and whose stomach vies with his pocket and tobacco pouch in constant emptiness.

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Among the various faces that El Chopo grew to know on his way to market was that of a kindly old gentleman who once or twice had stopped him and given him a copper. The old man's name was Don Ramón González.

One day, meeting El Chopo perched upon his donkey along the high road, he left the footpath, and, resting one hand upon the donkey's mane, he eyed the fish.

"What will this pannier fetch in the market now?" said he.

"Fifteen reals, maybe," replied El Chopo.

"Well, take it to my house!" said the old man, smiling.

"And where is your house, sir?"

"The other side of Sante Fe, where the road leads down to the salt pyramids on the beach; you will find it on the left at the corner of a path. It is shaded by eucalyptus, and used to be a farmhouse. Can you find it?"

"Yes," replied El Chopo.

And the old man loosing the donkey and turning back to the path with a cheerful "Good day," the lad cantered off in search of the house in question.

It was a pretty villa, with gardens back and front. When he knocked at the door a beautiful little girl came out and opened it, her hands all covered with flour. A servant stood behind her.

El Chopo felt a sense of awkwardness that had never troubled him before, and stood silently looking at this child in the very act of lifting down his basket to measure out the fish.

The girl broke into a pretty little rippling laugh, and the servant behind her, with one hand upon the

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door frame and the other upon her hip, smiled curiously, and said—

“What ails thee, charrán?”

Then he explained about his meeting with Don Ramón.

“I hope you will not cheat us, boy!” said the child, still laughing.

“Cheat you!”

His eyes flashed at her, and he transferred the fish to a bucket brought by the servant without another word. Then he was for leaping on his donkey, without so much as counting his fifteen reals, when the child called after him—

“Boy, come here.”

He came to the doorstep again. He looked down with shame at his dirty feet and tattered clothes.

“Boy, why are you so sulky?”

He shrugged his shoulders without looking up.

“Did I say anything to hurt you?”

Another shrug.

“Why then, look you, I will say something to make amends. I think you are a very pretty boy, and I like your eyes.”

“¡Jesús!” cried the servant behind her, and pulling her aside, and laughing heartily, she slammed the door in El Chopo’s face.

That night El Chopo, lying on the floor, his head pillowed on a coil of dry rope, dreamed of Paradise. The little maid seemed to him the embodiment of that happier life which he so longed for. He pictured her, as only a child artist could picture her, in heavenly robes, and wearing a jewelled crown upon her dark tresses. In his sleep she stooped and kissed him.

Thus many years passed over the heads of El Chopo



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and Peláo, and the brutalizing influence of this sordid dreary life they led among the half starved fisher folk had wonderfully little effect upon the elder and more intelligent of the boys, for he was blessed with a kindly imagination, and was able to weave great fabrics in the air for hours and hours together, earning for himself the same title that was thrust upon Joseph by his brethren.

As for Peláo, the hard life made him cunning and apathetic. Under other conditions the lad might have given greater promise, but, not being able to lift himself above the level of these conditions, he allowed them to shape him to their mould. And this is the case with millions, who incur our scorn, not for what they are, but for what Providence has seen fit to make of them.

CHAPTER VII

"The curse still burning in his heart and brain,
And yet he doth remain
Patient the while, and tranquil and content :
The pious soul hath framed unto itself
A second nature, to exist in pain
As in its own allotted element !"

SOUTHEY.


AFTER twenty years of exile, the Jesuits were recalled by O'Donnell at the instance of the reigning house of France. Even a couple of years before this open invitation, however, matters had assumed a more promising aspect.

It was at this crisis that one Padre Ignacio made his appearance in Santa Fe.

Sixteen years in exile had wrought much change in the priest whom we knew as Manuel. White hair was mingled with the brown, the noble forehead was not unfurrowed by wrinkles, the eyes had sunk a little in their sockets, and the head was no longer as upright as it used to be.

Padre Ignacio arrived by the diligence one summer's evening. Instead of going on to Santa Fe and putting up at the Hotel of the Four Nations or the Alameda Hotel, both excellent institutions in their way, he alighted at the little Fonda del Trini in the village of Cinco Caminos.

The Fonda del Trini is one of those resting places



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which the high road, passing east and west through Santa Fe, offers to thirsty travellers. In this oasis one might waste a dreamy hour over a copita of brandy, a cup of coffee and a cigarette. It boasted one spare bedroom, and so it had called itself a "Fonda." This bedroom had been engaged and paid for some weeks beforehand, in anticipation of the traveller's arrival.

The window was shaded by an awning, and looked out over a parral, or courtyard, covered with vines on flat trellis work. It was very pleasant of an evening to sit at the open window in the starlight and gaze through the apertures of the vine at the faces in the lamplight down below. Sometimes the guitar and castanets would assert themselves, hands would clap time to music, and dainty feet would trip lightly in response to some gallant invitation.

The one bedroom had been well paid for, therefore the landlord and his wife had no need to be over particular. Yet the day before the Jesuit arrived, says good Don Paco to his fat helpmate—

"This priest, seeing who comes to bespeak his rooms, should be a Jesuit."

"Aye! So says the village priest."

"I have half a mind to send Don Ramón a message."

"A message?"

"To bid him take back his money and give me back my room."

"Aye! I'm none too happy over it myself. The Alcalde says all Jesuits are poisoners, and I with two little ones that would take lollipops off Old Nick himself! The barber says that ill-luck will fall on the house."

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"And what says the priest?"

"Says naught! It isn't what he says, it's the way he looks and sighs and pauses. The things he leaves unsaid frighten one more than all the other fools' twaddle put together. But there"—a deep sigh—"the money's good money, Paco!"

"Well! let him stay the night before we begin to talk."

Arrived opposite this wayside inn, the priest came forward to the doorway and stood for a moment bowing to the landlady. His face, evidently, was not so very appalling, for the landlady, as though obeying some strong impulse, curtsied and kissed his hand, whilst the landlord relieved him of his handbag and bestowed it in his room.

"I never saw evil behind such a face as that," said the landlady when her husband came downstairs, leaving the Jesuit in his bedroom.

Don Paco shrugged his shoulders and grunted "Wait!"

"What eyes, man, what eyes!"

"What, *mine*?"

"*Thine*! Pish!"

Scarcely had Padre Ignacio come downstairs when he was visited by one Don Ramón González, a wealthy old countryman of Santa Fe, who had travelled in France and Belgium.

Don Ramón was proprietor of the sugar factory of La Aurora and of many broad acres of sugar-growing meadow land. He made no attempt to disguise his sympathy with the Jesuits, though when questioned as to his actual dealings with that body the old man shook his white head and was silent. When people asserted, however, that his prosperity was largely

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due to their influence, and that part of his wealth was really held in trust, he never actually denied the statement, though always endeavouring to change the conversation, in his brusque manner. And your Spanish country gentleman of the old type has a way of being both blunt and diplomatic.

After their greetings and congratulations had been exchanged, Padre Ignacio and Don Ramón seated themselves at a little square table under the giant vine, and a smoking hot dinner was placed before them, together with wine from Jeréz.

Their conversation was, for the most part, in French, although interjections were often let fall in Spanish; and whenever they perceived that nobody was within earshot, they conversed in Spanish altogether.

Eavesdroppers might have gathered that Don Ramón was there to welcome the herald of the Jesuits, to offer him all possible homage and assistance, to give him whatever information and advice might seem most useful, and to render an account of his stewardship. It was noticeable, however, that the good father never once referred to the college or any other property as directly belonging to the Jesuits. In fact, he courteously interrupted his companion whenever such assumptions were made.

"And when Don Antonio Nieto handed you the keys of the College," said Padre Ignacio, after several matters had already been discussed, "did you find it in good condition or—how?"

Don Ramón shrugged his shoulders, tightened his elbows against his ribs, and extended his forearms with the hands outspread and the palms turned upwards. This posture, joined to a certain pursing of the lips and raising of the eyebrows, was a polite

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intimation that he preferred to say as little as possible. For Don Ramón knew full well that Antonio was the Jesuit's brother.

"Antonio," continued the Padre, "is still in Madrid. Some say that he has contracted certain ties which bind him there, others" (and here the Jesuit smiled sceptically) "maintain that he has laid the foundation of a prosperous business, and is likely to double his present fortune. However that may be, it is improbable that he will return to Santa Fe. Do not therefore be overscrupulous in speaking your mind."

Don Ramón turned his wine glass round and round between his thumb and forefinger, regarding the golden liquor with a perplexed frown. Presently he spoke.

"Without beating about the bush, if you ask me to speak my mind freely, Don Antonio's line of conduct whilst in Santa Fe was not only remarkable for its omission of those duties which were given him in trust, but was even—¡vaya!—was even scandalous."

The Jesuit pushed his plate aside and leant forward on his elbows, regarding his companion with eager curiosity. There was even a strained look about the blue eyes and a sudden pallor in the face.

"Was even scandalous, eh?"

"Yes," replied the other, still frowning at his wine, "for a man, look you, that comes rollicking into a quiet town like Santa Fe and is followed ten days later by a mistress, a peasant woman from the North, and in a certain condition which boots us not to talk about—a man who bears himself thus is scarcely one to be associated with the Company of Jesus. But I offend your ear?"

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"In no way," replied the Jesuit, clearing his throat. "I am without any personal feeling in the matter. I wish you honestly to speak your mind and to yield me your impressions, leaving me to accept or reject as God directs me."

"Well, then, I repeat, it was a scandalous thing. It is most shameful that a man should wreak such wrong against a woman, but when that man, in addition, holds the honour of a great fraternity in hand, such conduct passes my comprehension."

"Such men," replied the Jesuit hoarsely, with his eyes aflame, "should certainly be stoned to death."

"Aye! you speak justly."

"Though it lies in their power to make some little reparation. I mean towards the woman."

"Yes," returned Don Ramón, "it lies in their power to do so, but they never do it."

"You mean——?"

"I mean this—that Don Antonio begat two children by this poor woman, and then deserted her."

"Deserted her?" echoed the Jesuit, as in a trance.

"And left her utterly unprovided for."

"And what became of her?"

The other laughed. Yet his laugh had something of that bitterness which men acquire with a knowledge of this world's cruelty and misery.

"You know the old adage! 'Hunger and the Devil each claimed to be the uglier, and laid a wager. Woman was made the judge, and Hunger won the wager.' After some few changes and vicissitudes, she became the companion of a poor fisherman, who treated her—¡vaya!—as such people are wont to do."

The priest rose from his seat and strode a few paces

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away, where he stood looking into a clump of banana trees with his back to Don Ramón.

Presently he returned to the table, remarking with a smile—

“I am ever suspicious, and I thought I heard a crunching of the gravel behind the bushes.”

“For my part, I heard nothing,” said Don Ramón.

“Forgive my interruption. I have a fad which I trust you will allow me to indulge. In the northern clime whence I have just arrived, our sky is so often cloudy, our feeble moon so sickly, that the glorious Andalusian moonshine stealing through this vine reproaches me for keeping a lamp alight. Seeing that our meal is ended, I propose to extinguish this artificial light, and revel in the natural one.”

“By all means.”

The priest put out the lamp, and seated himself again.

“And now, my dear Don Ramón, what is it you were saying? Ah, yes, that the fisherman treated this woman very ill.”

“She slaved from early morning till late at night beside the other women at the washing trough, and many a day she trudged with naked feet to the river Guadalote with her burden.”

“Hah!”

“When the winter rains and gales put a stop alike to fishing and to washing, it is said that she and her little ones were without a crust to eat for days together, and sometimes were even driven to begging in Santa Fe, or raking among the rubbish heaps.”

“And did she not say a word? did she not publish her wrongs?”

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"How so? It was common knowledge that she was the cast-off mistress of Don Antonio."

"To be sure. I remember now."

"However, what is done is done——"

"But, my dear sir, in a way we may still make reparation," said the Jesuit, rising from his chair and striding up and down between the rush chairs and trunks of vine. "This woman and her children must be rescued from their misery. I will make it my own particular duty to look to it, and at once."

"You cannot."

"Cannot? I must and *will*. Who shall prevent me?"

"She is dead and buried."

The Jesuit stood looking down at him for a while, and his back being turned to the moonlight, Don Ramón was unable to note whether any keen emotions were exerting themselves in his features.

When he sat down his companion felt sure that a moan had escaped from those pale and tightened lips.

He also remarked that from that moment Padre Ignacio's interest in all the further news he had to tell him was purely mechanical. Often when an answer was required it was not forthcoming.

Nevertheless, he pretended not to notice these omissions, and patiently waded through the list of their common enemies and probable supporters.

Don Ramón saw fit to analyze public feeling in great detail.

Whilst public feeling is thus submitted to the microscope, let us pause for a moment to ascertain its tendency and weight.

Long before Padre Ignacio and Don Ramón had finished their meal of chicken and rice, the lizards

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were awakened by a buzz of heated conversation inside the barber's shop, and after the Padre had been left alone and was gazing at the moonlight stealing between the leaves and tendrils, the import of his arrival had been exhaustively examined from some fifteen distinct and separate points of view, ten inside, three at the window, and two in the doorway.

Of these fifteen, however, only one was being shaved. The remainder had just looked in.


The village priest was there seated upon a bench, the schoolmaster was under operation in the shaving chair, the mayor, or Alcalde, who also was a goatherd, stood scratching his head with one hand and holding his hat in the other, whilst a dozen of the more well-to-do fishermen, boatowners and tradesmen were leaning against various greasy corners of the shop, inside and out. One man, seated on the ground in a corner, however, is worthy of our passing notice.

He wore a soft felt hat somewhat tall in the crown, not quite so pointed and conical as the gipsy's sugar-loaf hat, but halfway between this type and the low hemispherical crown that is often seen to-day.

From underneath this hat fell streaming a long red-spotted handkerchief over the nape of his neck. He wore a gaily-coloured jacket hanging hussar-fashion over his shoulders, and round his waist was an ample crimson sash, wound round and round him several times, and forming a handy receptacle for knives or contraband tobacco.

Open leather leggings encased his legs below the knees, and from each knee dangled a leather ball and tassel.

He was short in stature, and this shortness was further accentuated by a stoop. The nose was long and



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straight and thin. The eyes were small, and hidden under very bushy black eyebrows. The mouth was ugly and derisive, the face was clean-shaven.

The link that held this man to Cinco Caminos was his employment in the deserted Jesuit College on the hill-top, [where he had been custodian for the last six or seven years, occasionally hiring a couple of farm-labourers to make up arrears of gardening, and sometimes not being visible for weeks and weeks together. His somewhat mysterious manner of existence, joined to his ugliness, had caused the children to christen him "Tío Patas." This nickname clung to him pertinaciously, and it suited his derisive humour to accept it.

Tío Patas received his pay from Don Ramón González, who would often visit the college and criticize its condition. It was subsequent to such visits that Tío Patas came down sore-headed to the village and hired himself further assistance. Recently, however, he had been in and out of the village more frequently.

One of his little fads was to consider himself a member of the Jesuit order and to speak of the Company as "we." Another consisted of a most grandiloquent way he had of addressing listeners with an elegant wave of the arm, his cigarette held gracefully between his thumb and forefinger, the little finger stiffly extended, the hand sweeping round and round in horizontal circles to punctuate each sentence.

He spoke with an evident relish of every word he uttered, and, for want of an audience on the hill-top, had sometimes been known to harangue the empty air, commencing "Gentlemen."

Having just concluded a fierce and well-rounded period, he put his cigarette back into his mouth, half

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closed his eyes as the smoke encircled his face, and listened for the agreement or opposition of his audience.

Of the schoolmaster nothing was visible save his two arms and hands, which were held out on either side of the barber, who was stooping over his head from behind. The assembly, however, riveted their eyes upon the schoolmaster's hands, which were very eloquent, sometimes clenching themselves and shaking convulsively with pathos or conviction, at others stiffly extended in an appeal to one's sense of reason, and even turned palms downwards and paddling along in the air whilst their owner was seeking for a clinching phrase to throw at the head of his enemy.

The oil lamp suspended low down from the ceiling projected the shadow of the schoolmaster's hands all over the walls to left and right, and when he wagged his left hand thumb he made the alcalde blink, and when he shaped his thumbs and forefingers as if he were taking a pinch of salt (a gesture made use of when the argument was very subtle) he seemed to be plucking at the priest's bald head with a hand of gigantic size.

There were times when the schoolmaster's mouth was filled with the conventional walnut, which in those days was often made use of by lantern-jawed customers in order to afford the barber a convex surface. During such moments his hands were all that were left to him, for the walnut was large, and had served, with occasional swilling, through many and many a month.

"Enough," said the schoolmaster, "of personal abuse."

"Well said," remarked the priest.

"Our friends the Alcalde and Tío Patas are inclined to base their arguments upon each other's

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parentage and honesty. That is not the point. What are we here for ? ”

“ To get shaved,” suggested the barber.

“ No ! ” shouted the schoolmaster indignantly, and glaring at the barber upside down ; “ that is a minor count. We are here to decide whether or no the Jesuits shall return to Santa Fe ; *that* is the point.”

Acclamation from the window and hasty retreat of an inquisitive lizard.

“ *That* is the point. And how to decide that point ? There are two possible methods of attacking every problem, synthesis and analysis.”

“ And paralysis,” ventured the Alcalde, looking round the room to see whether he had put his foot in it. Nobody was smiling, so the alcalde thought he had scored a point. The schoolmaster’s two hands wherewith he had thrown “ synthesis ” and “ analysis ” at his audience looked not a little surprised, but the worthy man owed the alcalde six hundred reals, so he made the best of it, and said,—

“ Our much esteemed alcalde is a man of original thought. As a matter of fact, there *is* a third method of argument, which one might call ‘ paralysis.’ It demands, however, no little strength of lungs, and whilst admitting that we might tackle our subject in all three ways—that is to say by ‘ synthesis, analysis and paralysis,’ I propose to confine myself to the two former, in view of their greater logic and importance.”

“ Well said ! ” cried those outside, who had not a notion of what he meant.

“ And having decided upon our system of investigation, let us proceed to put it into practice.

“ The question as to whether or no we can tolerate

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the Jesuits in Santa Fe depends, I opine, upon how the Jesuits will behave themselves ? ”

“ So far I am with you,” assented Tío Patas.

“ Very well, then,” continued the schoolmaster, “ in order to build up an idea of what their conduct will be in the future, we first must ascertain what it has been in the past.”

“ Precisely,” replied the priest.

“ Precisely. That is to say, in order that we may perform the complex operation of synthesis, we must first deal with the scarcely less complex problem of analysis.”

The schoolmaster's hands being opened wide and stiff in an appeal to common sense, his audience hastened to declare that this point was obvious, especially as it did not appear to involve any decision whatever.

“ Well, then,” resumed the schoolmaster, thrusting aside the hand of the barber, who was about to replace the walnut inside his hollow cheeks, “ let us first commence with the recital of what we well and truly know the Jesuits to have done or left undone. Having agreed the list of good and evil, we will afterwards proceed with the second and more difficult operation.

“ Item No. 1, let it be declared.”

Hereupon the barber succeeded in forcing the walnut into the schoolmaster's mouth, who contented himself with holding aloft his closed fist as an intimation that each item, when approved, should be counted by the extension of its corresponding finger.

“ Item No. 1,” said the Alcalde. “ The Jesuits poisoned the wells and caused the plague.”

“ Thou art a liar ! ” cried Tío Patas.

“ I am the Alcalde,” remonstrated the other with much dignity.

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“‘For want of good men they made my father Alcalde,’” laughed Tío Patas, repeating an ancient quip.

The schoolmaster's hands were here seen to open and to churn the air in a weary and deprecating manner, the priest coughed and murmured that the proceedings lacked formality, seeing which those outside urged that the disputants should apologize. The Alcalde and Tío Patas, however, being old friends, were all the more embittered with each other now that they had fallen out in argument.

“Item No 1, the Jesuits poisoned the wells,” repeated the Alcalde, setting his teeth firmly.

“Then I only lament one thing,” said Tío Patas.

“What dost thou lament, man?” asked the Alcalde unguardedly.

“That thou hadst already given up water and taken to drinking rum.”

At this point there arose such a fierce altercation that the schoolmaster took the walnut out of his mouth and sat upright in his chair with face be-daubed in soapsuds endeavouring to quell the outcry. Two of the bystanders rushed in between Tío Patas and the Alcalde, and the priest protested loudly at such riotous behaviour.

Eventually the disputants were pacified, every one resumed his station as before, and the barber went on shaving.

Nevertheless, Tío Patas gained his point. The wells were ruled out of order, and the schoolmaster as yet had not extended a single thumb or finger.

“Item No. 2,” said the Alcalde resignedly; “the Jesuits practised immorality.”

“Forgive me, gentlemen,” interrupted Tío Patas,

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"for troubling you with one or two remarks. Our Company is far above the aspersions of this gentleman. Even were we not, however, there is a Castilian proverb which says, 'he who has a roof of glass should not throw stones at his neighbour.' If this be so"—here he grinned derisively and waved his hand at the Alcalde—"what think ye of a man who, living with another man's wife, yet dares to call out upon us for immorality?"

The Alcalde winced at the roar of laughter which followed this accusation, but knowing it to be true, he accorded it silent contempt, and continued excitedly—

"The truth is the truth, however the Jesuits may parry and evade it. They are born without shame. You cannot change the markings of a beast——"

"That argument smells of goats," chuckled Tío Patas.

It now became evident that the matter could proceed no further on these lines, and, the bystanders intervening once more, the Alcalde worked himself into such a fury that he strode out of the barber's shop muttering curses upon all whom it contained, and very nearly foaming at the mouth.

When silence had been restored and the priest had made and lighted another cigarette, he thus addressed the assembly—

"Gentlemen, far be it from me, a humble priest, loving all my neighbours, whether good Christians or Jesuits, and wrestling with the devil seven days a week—far be it from me to cast aspersions on so mighty an organization as the Company of Jesus.

"I have always refused to do so, and shall ever so continue. Our worthy schoolmaster has asked for a



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list of those accusations which, at various times, have been brought against the Jesuits.

"Without in any way upholding these accusations, I venture, as a purely impartial onlooker, to fill up the gap which no other person here present elects to deal with. I must ask you to bear in mind that I merely repeat what I have heard, and place it before you without comment, for what it is worth.

"Be it known, then, that there are those who accuse the Jesuits of overweening ambition, who say that they stop at nothing in order to climb above men's heads into a position of tyrannical power.

"It has been said that even the poison cup has formed an item in the multitude of means to attain their ends. Exempt from the vow of poverty, it is their custom secretly to acquire great wealth. At one time they possessed, in South America alone, some hundreds of square miles of territory, over seventy thousand head of cattle, and a vast retinue of servants.

"This, remember, is not what I say myself, but only what I have heard from others.

"In all countries, so they say, the Jesuits have secretly acquired much property. For the most part this property is held through the mediation of laymen, who are merely their puppets——"

"And what if it be true?" interrupted Tío Patas; "what if the sugar factory kept three score of men employed when the Jesuits possessed it? Whom the Lord loveth, his bitch litters sucking pigs! Why, when they went away it fell into a ruin, and those who laboured there were starved!"

"Very well," assented the priest with dignity "far be it from me to prove to you aught else than

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what you say. I have no interest whatever in so doing. Now let us proceed to other matters. There are those who accuse the Jesuits of impiety and idolatry.

"In proof of these assertions it has been shown that in China the Jesuit missionaries, finding the natives unwilling to forsake their idols, grafted a kind of spurious Christianity on to the existing paganism, and by that means were enabled to avoid collision with the people. If this be so, and I only repeat what has been told to me, it would suggest that the Jesuits were more anxious to further their worldly aims and ambitions than to preach the Gospel of Christ.

"This accusation is so grave that I leave you entirely to judge of its solidity."

The priest, however, resumed his cigarette with so heavy a countenance, and shook his head with such palpable conviction, that his listeners doubted not for one moment what were his inmost thoughts. Tío Patas was the next to speak.

"China, look you, gentlemen, is many a hundred miles away——"

"Many a thousand," corrected the schoolmaster, who had risen from the shaving-chair and was wiping his chin.

"So much the worse for the story, when it arrives. When one knows how much a tale may gather between here and Madrid, how the devil are we to believe a story that has travelled some thousands of miles?"

"Lastly," resumed the priest, "it has been said——"

At this instant there was some little commotion around the door, and the Alcalde pushed his way in, holding in his hand his bâton of office, and accompanied by the Alguacil, or village constable.

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"This," thundered the Alcalde, glaring all around him, "is a riotous meeting."

"Fiddlesticks!" ejaculated the priest and the schoolmaster in astonishment.

"Is a riotous meeting," repeated the furious Alcalde, "and as such must be suppressed."

Several murmurs of indignation here arose among the bystanders.

"Understand me, gentlemen," continued the Alcalde, "I come but to suppress the riotous and treasonable portion of this meeting. The respectable and orderly portion remain with God and without my interference."

"And which is the riotous and treasonable portion?" asked the schoolmaster.

The Alcalde made no answer, but, signing to the Alguacil, he cast himself upon Tío Patas and lifted him under the arms, and the Alguacil having imprisoned an ankle in either hand, the procession went out of the door.

After they had gone some distance up the village, the Alcalde dragged his victim down a side street, for several of the idlers had followed them from the barber's.

"Where are you taking me?" asked Tío Patas, when they sat him on the ground to rest.

"That where are we taking you?" repeated the Alcalde, panting and looking with a frown towards the Alguacil, who took off his cap and commenced to scratch his head.

"Aye, where are you taking me?"

"Why didst thou call me such filthy names, me, the Alcalde, *and before so many people?* Dost thou think that I have no self-respect? By God,

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thou hast called me all the foulest terms in the dictionary."

"The stupidity of this animal!" ejaculated Tío Patas, turning up the whites of his eyes to heaven.

"It is the truth."

"What!" thundered Tío Patas, springing towards the other in an apparent frenzy of indignation, "dost thou dare say before witnesses that I called thee all the foulest terms there are?"

"Thou saidst I was an adulterer, a liar, and an ass."

"Did I call thee a cheat?"

"No."

"Or a bandit?"

"No."

"Or a thief?"

"No."

"All of which thou art. Then give thanks to God that I said so little."

Saying which, Tío Patas handed the Alcalde a cigarette, which at first he refused to take, but being compelled with much violence, at last accepted it and even lighted it from the flame which the other kindled.

"Nevertheless——" resumed the Alcalde, whose wrath was not quite dead.

"Smoke and hold thy peace," said Tío Patas, and he found another cigarette for the Alguacil, and last of all took one for himself out of a special petaca whence only himself was served. Those who passed that way for some little time afterwards saw nothing but three incandescent sparks in a line along the low stone wall, and each spark in its turn would grow more vivid and illuminate a countenance; then it would descend to a lower level, whereupon a voice would



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arise in friendly converse, and presently, the red spark resuming its position, the voice would cease and one of the other sparks, commencing to glow more brilliantly, seemed to portend that an answer was coming forth.

Now the defender of the Jesuits having been abstracted from the assembly in this most sudden fashion, there were only left the accuser and the judge.

And this accounts for my being unable to tell you that any definite conclusion was formed on this occasion. Report has it that before another twenty minutes had elapsed the schoolmaster was seen to yawn and stretch himself, the barber, subsiding in an easy chair beside the door, was heard to snore, and the priest, looking contemptuously around the barber's shop, was observed to rise from his bench, to gather up his skirts and to stride out home, gazing up at the stars and wondering what God was thinking of to station him amongst these idiots, with only twelve reals a day wherewith to bless himself.

And the lizards, having assured themselves that nothing more was happening, disported over the lintel to their hearts' content, and the cigarrón, perceiving that at last he might assert himself, commenced, at first tentatively, to chirp forth his one and only note, then, growing bolder, sent forth such a triumphant clamour that at last he obtained an answer from some six or seven sympathisers, and they all gave thanks that the village had gone to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII

"Yet had his aspect nothing of severe,
But such a face as promised him sincere.
Nothing reserved or sullen was to see,
But sweet regards, and pleasing sanctity :
Mild was his accent, and his action free."

DRYDEN.

ON the following morning Padre Ignacio, who all night long had barely closed his eyes for half an hour, was surprised by the sudden opening of his door, when a swarthy, black-eyed damsel, with short petticoats around her ankles and a red carnation in her hair, came to his bedside and announced that in compliance with his orders she had prepared his coffee and was there to bid him rise.

Without more ado the young woman next stepped over to the chair on which rested the good father's clothing, felt his woollen under-vest and exclaimed "¡ Jesús !" when she found how thick it was, examined his hose and boots inside and out, and marvelled that everything should be so heavy.

"I have come from a cold climate, daughter," answered the astonished priest, "and I will thank thee to leave me alone and close the door."

After which the Jesuit dressed himself and, coming downstairs, sat moodily taking his coffee at the same table under the vine where, overnight, he had supped with Don Ramón.

Having finished his coffee and having spent half an

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hour in writing, Padre Ignacio went forth to "take the air." For nearly a mile he was allowed to saunter along quite unmolested, but turning down on to the beach and leaving the road behind, he observed that a group of young ragamuffins were hovering in his wake. Presently he discerned cries of "Jesuit" and "Infidel," which, from being half audible at first, had gradually become louder and louder, and before very long he heard a whirr in the air behind him, which was followed by the rattle of a stone on the pebbles to his right, then another whirr, and a second projectile flew past him on the left.

The Jesuit turned to face his persecutors, who paused to look at him and half drew back; then, after a moment's thought, he strode to where the first pebble seemed to have fallen, and, making believe to pick it up, raised his arm aloft with a round black object held between finger and thumb.

"Look!" he cried; "what it is you have thrown at me."

The noble face was so kindly and the blue eyes so smiling that the inquisitive children, little by little, drew towards him in a shambling, ashamed fashion, and after a brief interval he was surrounded by a group of brown-skinned urchins, the biggest and most elaborately appressed of whom was eight years old, and possessed of a hat, a shirt and a pair of breeches, whilst the youngest was only about four and was clothed in a "complete frog suit," as the Spaniards say, or, to talk in plain English, as naked as he was born.

Fourteen brown fingers were being steadily sucked and twenty-eight eyes looked steadily towards the Jesuit's upraised hand.

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"Which of you cast this first stone?" asked Padre Ignacio. Thirteen brown fingers immediately indicated the culprit.

"Look!" said the priest, "what thy stone has turned to," and he handed him a small bronze coin. All eyes were now opened very wide.

"Where fell the second stone?" asked the priest.

The chorus of fingers here indicated its resting place with the utmost candour.

Padre Ignacio strode onwards and, stooping down rapidly, lifted his hand aloft once more. This time something was seen to glitter in the sunshine like burnished silver.

"Who cast this second stone at me?"

This time there was a riot, fully eight voices claiming to have done the deed.

The priest selected the nearest hand, and placed therein a new two-real piece of silver, saying—

"Look what thy stone has turned to."

After the excitement had somewhat subsided, Padre Ignacio glanced over the various hands, and perceiving that the youngster in frog's clothing still held a pebble, he feigned to be much concerned, and, wringing his hands, cried in a voice of anguish—

"Drop that pebble, child; thou knowest not what thou dost."

The child let fall the stone, and commenced to cry.

"Have you heard," asked Padre Ignacio, addressing the group in general, "have you heard what happened to the children that cast stones at San Oportuno?"

Silence.

"The first stone they cast at him," said the priest, looking very serious, "became a coin of bronze. The

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second stone," he continued after a pause, and raising his voice to a majestic chant, "became a coin of silver——"

Then, in a hoarse whisper, he leant towards the children with a frown, and asked—

"But know ye what happened to the one that threw the third?"

No one knew.

"No!" thundered the priest. "None of ye know. Ask of your mothers and fathers and they will not tell you. And why? Because they *dare* not."

Saying which, he gathered his gown around him and calmly strode away.

The group watched his departure in silence.

Presently the oldest of the desperadoes spoke.

"I don't believe anything would happen at all."

"No!" cried another quickly. "Nor I."

"Let's throw one and try," proposed a third, keeping his hands tightly folded behind his back.

"I know what would happen to the one who threw the third stone," remarked the pessimist of the party mysteriously.

"What?" cried the others, gathering round him.

"His arm would wither up."

This, by some, was jeered at, but there were others who held their peace.

"If," cried the wit of the party, "the first stone turns to copper and the second to silver, why, clearly the third would turn to gold."

"Clearly!" shouted half a dozen voices. "Then let's throw one and try."

But nobody raised his hand.

Then the second oldest boy, who hitherto had not spoken, called out that the Jesuit being already out

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of reach, the most sensible thing to do was to go and spend the little they had got, and with a resounding war-whoop the crowd went scampering up the beach towards the village, and reinforcements having joined them, a thick cloud of dust was presently seen along the high road careering madly away upon some six and thirty feet.

The Jesuit noted this phenomenon with a quiet smile of satisfaction, and reaching the firm damp sand, pursued his way along the water's edge, his hands folded behind him, and bending his head in thought.

So absorbed was the good father with his meditation that after walking half a mile he almost collided with another individual who carried an open book and whose pallid careworn countenance and great white eyeballs confronted him in mute surprise when he came to a sudden standstill.

The figure before him was lank and lean, and the clean-shaven face possessed that stubbly blackness which renders some men darker when fresh from the barber's hands than others who have not shaved for more than a week.

The clothes were mended and re-mended, and the whole attire betokened the most penurious respectability.

It was the village schoolmaster, the day being one of many "feast" days.

For his portion of the "feast" the man of learning carried a small wooden toothpick behind his ear, and, thus equipped, was ready for any sudden emergency of eating.

Thus unexpectedly confronting each other, the two strangers bowed and passed the time of day, and fell into friendly conversation.

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"I will not disguise from you," said the schoolmaster at length, "that I know who you are."

"You surprise me," exclaimed the priest, elevating his eyebrows; "and pray, sir, whom have I the honour of addressing?"

The schoolmaster waved his hand round in a circle to indicate the horizon of sea and land, and made answer—

"You are speaking, sir, to the hungriest individual in all this vast domain. Thus, sir, does society repay the scholar and philosopher."

"Alas!" said the Jesuit, "we have much in common. I take you to be the schoolmaster of this pueblo? The Company of Jesús, sir, has ever devoted itself to the education of the young; its cry, unlike that of the clergy, has been 'Onward.' The Company formulated the very first methods used in the National Schools of Spain; they control, at present, the educational system of France, which they have completely re-modelled. I am vain enough, sir, to couple my name with yours, and to claim that men like you and me are the creators of thought and character, the moulders of the young idea, the potters to whom is given a mass of shapeless clay wherewith to fashion a mind. And we do it, sir, we do it. And what is our reward?"

"Well might you ask!" sighed the schoolmaster.

"Our reward, my dear sir, is this," continued the Jesuit, threading his arm familiarly through that of his companion. "*You* are paid a miserable pittance, ridiculously trivial in comparison with the work performed, whilst *I* am exiled and sent to wander in foreign lands."

"How true!" replied the other, delighted to be

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thus treated by one who wore those marks of superiority and eminence in his face and speech which no one might gainsay. Indeed, half of men's hatred for the Jesuits arises from envy of their distinction. And continuing his conversation, Padre Ignacio accompanied the schoolmaster along the margin of the lazy water for nearly half an hour, leaving the simple man bewitched with his condescension, humility and grace.

At length they parted.

"My dear sir," said the Jesuit, clasping his hand, "your conversation has charmed me. I had not thought to be so fortunate. When one remembers that this village is a thousand miles away from the great universities of Leipsic, Paris and Vienna, and to find—bless me, good-bye, sir, I look forward to meeting you again."

The schoolmaster flourished his most elegant farewell.

"By the way," remarked Padre Ignacio, smiling, "you might mention to the good priest of the parish, Don——"

"Don Francisco Lopez."

"Don Francisco, that if perchance this evening at the dinner hour he should be able to bend his steps in the direction of my humble inn, the *Fonda del Trini*, I have a few words to say to him."

"With much pleasure, and I kiss your hands."

The schoolmaster turned his face towards the village and, humming a tune for the first time that week, he disappeared along the high road and sought out the parish priest.

That worthy received the invitation with pretended scorn, yet it cost him trouble to suppress his gratifica-

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tion. As for his curiosity, it was as evident as the nose upon his face, which is saying much.

At first he refused to go, but the schoolmaster persuaded him with such glowing praise of the Jesuit's urbanity that the poor priest gave way with much apparent reluctance and assented with the very worst grace he could possibly command.

"This Jesuit has bewitched thee," said the priest banteringly as he bade the schoolmaster good-bye in the cobbler's doorway.

"Nay," replied the schoolmaster, "but he is the only man who has ever shown signs of appreciating me."

"That is to say, he has plied thee with flattery."

"¡Hombre! The compliment pleases me. Thy Bible says that a man is never a prophet in his own country."

"I will answer thee from thy own copy-books," replied the priest. "Thy Jesuit reminds me of the proverb, 'Too much courtesy, too much craft.'"

And climbing once more the bare brick staircase whose treads were edged with oak, the priest called out to his ancient servant that she need not cook more beans for the evening meal than she wanted for herself, and as for the few sardines they had better be eaten now; more was the pity he had bought them.

Those were the days when old Spanish customs as to the hours for breakfasting and dining were still in vogue, and the meal of the day was taken at twelve or one. People retired to rest at ten o'clock or even nine. French customs, however, were gradually cropping up in families who wished to be thought well travelled and refined.

Thus it was that if a man asked you to dine you

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knew not whether to present yourself at noon or eventide unless he added "Spanish time" or "French time."

Padre Ignacio had set this doubt at rest by mentioning the evening.

Arrived at the *Fonda del Trini*, the Jesuit priest came forward courteously to greet the village priest and begged him to be seated.

Two little wine-glasses were brought to them on a tray, and beside the glasses stood a bottle of curious shape.

"Allow me," said Padre Ignacio presently, rising with a smile and taking up the bottle, "to initiate you into one of our Northern vices. Give me your frank opinion."

Whereupon the Jesuit filled the two glasses from the bottle, and having tasted his own portion, sat awaiting the verdict of the priest.

"It is not bad," conceded the latter; "it reminds me of spirit of Geneva."

"Your discernment is not to be cheated," laughed the Jesuit. "As a matter of fact, this liquor is twin brother to the spirit you mention. Yet it belongs to a special class, made only in the Low Countries, and hitherto untasted, I believe, in Southern Spain. I beg you to have some more."

The village priest held out his empty glass and drew it back replenished.

"The Dutch are a wonderful people," remarked the guest.

"How very true!" murmured Padre Ignacio, shaking his head.

"A *marvellous* people, sir," continued the other with emphasis.

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"Which of their characteristics were you dwelling upon?" asked Padre Ignacio with artless interest.

"On their—¡vaya!—" The village priest paused somewhat at a loss, and then went on, "Are they not the people who produce the famous round cheese?"

"Quite right, quite right! It is a cheese of much merit."

"And have they not invented a special kind of linen, and a method of binding books?"

"Correct to the letter!"

"And were they not—er——"

"The Dutch," said Padre Ignacio, coming to his relief, "were the people, as you will recollect, whom it cost us some eighty years to conquer, and I fear that our conquest was stained with no little savagery, thanks to the Duke of Alva. Their dogged pertinacity has aroused the admiration of the whole inhabited globe. Whether in battling with the Spaniards by land, with the English by sea, or with Nature along their dykes and water-ways, they have shown a courage, a genius and an endurance which—but I interrupt you, I anticipate you?"

"Yes, you have taken the words out of my mouth," said the other with a forgiving smile.

"Pardon me!"

"There is nothing to forgive!"

The two priests bowed to one another, and the landlord of the *Fonda*, having spread the cloth, placed two bowls of soup in front of them, together with bread and condiments.

"Honour me by asking a blessing on the food," said Padre Ignacio.

"Nay, that pertains to you, my dear sir," replied the priest.

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"Indeed, now——"

"Certainly not——"

"I beg of you——"

"I could not think of it."

Eventually the Jesuit persuaded his companion to accept this post of honour.

Then arose a struggle over the wine, which was more prolonged. The Jesuit, however, was obdurate. His guest must choose or the wine must remain undrunk."

The village priest having chosen a certain Amontillado, the Jesuit was loud in its praise.

"I perceive," said he, "that I am dealing with a connoisseur."

"You flatter me," said the other with a modest smile.

"Indeed, I have never tasted such wine," protested Padre Ignacio.

"It is a wine," said the priest, "that I know better by repute than by experience. Alas! I am but a lowly shepherd, and such Amontillado as this has seldom passed my lips."

The Jesuit regarded him for a moment with a look of the keenest sympathy; then, calling to the landlord, bade him send off a dozen bottles of the Amontillado to the house of the priest.

"Nay," cried the other, "you put me to shame. Surely you did not suspect me of fishing for——"

"My dear sir," said Padre Ignacio reproachfully.

"Indeed, it is too good of you——"

"If," continued the Jesuit, "your pride does not lie in the way of accepting so worthless a tribute of my respect, I beg that you will have the goodness to make no more mention of it. What have we here? Chicken

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and rice once more ! Dear me ! I fear that you must be very weary of such dishes."

" Indeed, no ! " returned the priest, looking hard at the chicken.

Soup, chicken and sweets having each received attention, the host and guest were eventually left alone with their cigarettes and coffee, and the wine having warmed the cockles of the village priest's heart, he gradually became communicative, and volunteered much useful information.

" There is one point," said the Jesuit at length, " upon which I should desire some little enlightenment. It appears that one Don Antonio Nieto, who went away some ten or twelve years ago, left behind him his cast-off mistress."

" Ah, that," replied the other, " is indeed a pitiful case."

" So I believe," continued Padre Ignacio, without betraying any emotion. " It were useless for me to disguise from you that Don Antonio had, up to the time of his departure, enjoyed that confidence which our Society is wont to repose in persons of apparent respectability. For indeed we have nothing to conceal. As a relation of Don Antonio, and as a member of the Company whose reputation he held of so little account, I naturally take no small interest, you understand, in the welfare of this poor creature."

" She is dead."

" You shock me ! " said the Jesuit with a raising of the eyebrows and a sympathy so painfully mechanical that no one would have credited him with a heart. Then he continued coldly—

" If that be so the matter ends."

" Not entirely. There are children living."

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"So there are children! And how many?"

"Two."

"Girls?"

"No. Both of them boys."

The affair is becoming interesting," said Padre Ignacio, with a smile, and drawing his chair up closer to the table. "Are these children well cared for?"

"Alas! they are quite the reverse."

"Or educated?"

"They have no more education than a couple of melons."

"Then, sir, in the few idle hours that lie before me day by day, I shall make it my duty to take these children in hand."

"I do not think you will find the younger very anxious to improve himself."

"Ah!"

"He is, I believe, a little ne'er-do-weel, and full of mischief and foul words. The elder, on the other hand, has always struck me as——"

"Yes?"

"Has always appeared to be ambitious. He has a most curious disposition."

"Indeed!" rejoined the other. And for fully a minute he was lost in thought.

"Of course," continued the village priest, aiming a puff of smoke upwards through an opening in the vine, "he has not been able to get away from his drudgery to attend the daily school."

"Quite so," replied Padre Ignacio; then, suddenly confronting his guest, he demanded—

"The woman's last confession, to whom was it uttered?"

"To me."

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"Apart from that confession, whose seal I would not dare to ask you break, did you, in course of conversation, ever gather that this woman bore resentment against her betrayer?"

"Oh, no," replied the other very frankly. "She had much quiet philosophy in her constitution. All knew that Don Antonio had wronged her and taken her from her village under a false pretence. That she did not disguise. For the rest she was not communicative."

The Jesuit's blue eyes were fixed upon the speaker with a look of eagerness and penetration. Apparently he felt relieved, and saw no cause to doubt the village priest's good faith, for he turned his gaze elsewhere and fell to pondering.

"Quite outside her confession," volunteered the priest, "she left a little casket for her elder child when he reaches an age of discretion."

"What did it contain?"

"I do not know. In the first place, it is sealed up with much elaboration. In the second, it is probably some useless trifle which the poor wretch doted upon. It could not be very valuable, or she would have parted with it. I have held many such curious trusts in my time."

"A sealed casket!" murmured the Jesuit as though in soliloquy, and gazing upwards at the moon that was peeping through the vine.

After a few moments he changed the subject, and, turning to his companion, said, with apparent bluntness—

"Do you know that your presence in this village has caused me to ponder. You may have noticed my abstraction."

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"I have. Why should my presence here surprise you?"

"Tell me, in confidence now," said the Jesuit, leaning forward, "and forgive my clumsiness if, inadvertently, I have trodden upon forbidden ground. Have you in some way offended the powers that be?"

"Offended the powers that be?" repeated the village priest, taking his cigarette out of his mouth with genuine astonishment.

"Yes. Have you incurred the hatred of the queen, or trodden upon the toes of the primate? Have you quarrelled with some minister of power? Have you implicated yourself with some forbidden policy?"

"None of these things have I done," replied the other, opening his eyes and mouth to the utmost of their capacity.

The Jesuit drew back and laughed incredulously.

"Between brothers of the cloth, now?" he said at length.

"Indeed," replied the village priest in all good faith, "I do assure you that I have never given offence to a living soul outside the boundary of this village."

"Not even to the Bishop of Santa Fe?"

"Not even to the Bishop of Sante Fe."

"Then, why, sir," whispered the Jesuit, drawing very near to him and laying one hand upon his knee, "why, sir, *are you here?*"

"Ah-h-h!" sighed the priest as his face lighted up with sudden intelligence. "It surprises you that I have stuck in the mud in Cinco Caminos all these years, eh?"

"All these years!" repeated the Jesuit, shaking his head.

"Well, yes, but—you in your turn surprise me also.

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How is it that your knowledge of me is so very intimate ? ”

“ Do you suppose,” replied Padre Ignacio almost scornfully, “ that your movements have not been followed ? ”

“ Bless me ! ” said the village priest.

The other put his hand in his bosom and drew out a letter.

“ To whom is this envelope addressed ? ” asked Padre Ignacio, exhibiting it.

“ To the Bishop of Santa Fe, to be sure.”

“ It is my letter of introduction to him. In due course I shall present it. But mark this, first I have made a point of consulting *you*.”

“ And why so ? ”

“ Because,” replied the Jesuit, patting him on the knee and speaking in a subdued tone with much earnestness, “ because my instructions were to that effect. That is my simple answer.”

The village priest could scarcely believe his ears.

At length, when he rose to go, his host accompanied him to the gate, and, buttonholing him for a moment, remarked with the most charming grace—

“ Do not depart without accepting my thanks for all you have publicly protested in our behalf.”

“ Oh, as for that——” said the other deprecatingly, with a shrug of the shoulders.

“ Nay, you would belittle your good deeds, you would fain hide your light under a bushel. I feel sure that your voice has ever championed our cause, and I were a hog if I did not render thanks.”

“ Oh, my dear sir, it is a mere nothing.”

“ That is *your* opinion. Mine is different. I most heartily thank you for all the help you have extended

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to us, for all the good words you have spoken on our behalf, and I venture, with confidence, to thank you in anticipation for favours yet to come. We shall not prove ungrateful."

"Sir," replied the other, much moved, and resting one hand upon the Jesuit's sleeve, "the less you say of good services in the past the better. I will be honest with you. Quite unintentionally you have shamed me. But from the bottom of my heart I do assure you that whatever humble service may lie within my power in future, whatever my duty to God and my bishop will allow me to perform, those services are yours, though they cost me my last drop of blood. Good-night, sir, and God be with you."

Whereupon the priest turned his steps homeward along the moonlit road, and the Jesuit with his hands behind his back stood gazing upward at the firmament.

"To do good," murmured Padre Ignacio, "it is sometimes necessary to deceive. Deceit is nauseating, but how much more diplomacy amongst these simple people must yet be planned and consummated !

"Yonder seven stars like a coach and horses that looked down upon us in Belgium from so far, here seem to have approached the sombre earth until they almost hail us.

"What is their message ? I, the hypocrite, skilled in looking into men's hearts and reading their secrets without divulging what lies hidden in my own most heavy conscience, might I not also be a plaything in my turn ? I work like a clock because I am wound up. And the clock that ticks away so merrily would go just as well though no one ever looked at it. Yonder clockwork above me will keep on moving for all eternity, though no eye see it. And if we are all working

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without result? It the watch that was wound up to keep guard over crafty Time lies hidden away in a cupboard and runs down without ever being consulted, if the stars that fly like rockets along their paths are spending billions of horse-power to no purpose, if the brain that toils and aches will rot just as unproductively, when all is told, as the upcast and solitary oyster, why—if such a chaotic mockery were possible, which most palpably could never be, the deceiver himself would be the most deceived, and the most cunning would be the most befooled.

“I, who inwardly forgive myself my clumsy frauds because I feel myself one step more proximate to heaven than my victim, and therefore authorized to entice these fools the way that my Redeemer and myself think they should go, if from beyond the tomb arose a voice crying, ‘Of all these creatures whom thou scornest thou art the most easily lured, for thy bait is nothingness, thy chase is a vapid conceit of thy shallow imagination’—what then would be my plight?”

“Alas, how unhappy must be the soul that thirsts all in vain for an unknown tangibility, that tries to conceive and believe, and is ever frustrated!”

“Almost I could imagine the gloom of such a being, and well can I perceive how such wickedness would bear its own chastisement.”

So saying, the good father sauntered back to the table under the vine, where he sat gazing at the moonlight shadows of the leaves upon the ground, his elbows on his knees and his chin buried in his hand. Evidently he was a prey to disjointed thoughts, for at times he would mutter to himself—

“A sealed casket! And what might it contain? Some greatly treasured trinket? Poor girl! Poor

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girl ! I wonder, is he dark or fair ? I wonder, is he curly-haired like I was ? Or is he like his mother ? ”

Long and deep were his meditations, and there were signs of profound emotion in his bearing. Once, when he raised his face towards the beam of moonlight, a something shone and glistened in his eyes, then trembled and fell to the ground.

When at length he sought his bedchamber it was long past midnight.



CHAPTER IX

"And think'st thou, man, thy secret wish to shroud
In the close bosom's sealèd sepulchre,
Or, wrapt in saintly mantle from the crowd,
To hug thy darling sin that none may see?"

HEBER.

ON the morrow Padre Ignacio once more passed through the village, and, seeing the village priest in his balcony, stopped to give him good morning and to ask him one or two questions, which the parochial answered with willing courtesy. The small fry never once raised their arms to throw a stone, and one or two little girls, as if to shame the reprobates of yesterday, ran after the Jesuit to kiss his hand, which smelt of Parisian soap and felt like velvet, whereas their own priest's hands were horny and smelt of earth.

The village priest looked on silently from his balcony, so did the cobbler from his doorstep down below.

Leaving the village and passing the *Fonda del Trini*, Padre Ignacio made for a little tableland which overlooked the sea. It was sown with maize, which sighed and whispered with the dusty breeze coming from the road towards the sea.

Close to the water, on the edge of the low cliff, was a square enclosure with four whitewashed walls. A rude iron gate which faced upon the road was surmounted by an archway and a cross, whitewashed

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and glistening like the walls. In the middle of the enclosure stood a small shelter, large enough to hold a coffin and half a dozen mourners. Scattered around were rude gravestones and many graves without any stone at all.

One of the four walls was nearly eight feet wide, being honeycombed with niches. Some of the niches were empty, most of them were full, bricked up, and with inscriptions on the end-stones. There were some withered wreaths and crosses, not many. The Jesuit stood at the gate and found it locked. The cemetery was deserted. Walking round outside the enclosure he came to a point where a mound had been thrown against the wall, and he found it easy to climb inside.

"How dreadful and how real is the aspect of these Southern charnel grounds," he thought. "What moonlight or what dark phantoms could affright one as does this little cemetery now in the glare of day. My God!"

He stood there in the sun, that very sun whose ghastly splendour now seemed awful, hungry and cruel. He watched the trembling eddies of hot air rising from the graves and niches, he held his handkerchief to his nose and his head swam. In one corner of the cemetery was a cypress. He went towards it and sat down on a gravestone beneath its shade.

On his left was a sepulchre, the only one to be seen. White-faced and half-fainting, the priest turned his staring eyes towards the stone that should have closed it. It had been carelessly left open, or, having fallen open, nobody had troubled to close it. The three slabs which roofed the sepulchre had gaping joints

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between them through which came broad sheets of sunlight and fell upon a coffin. Something seemed to be moving in this coffin !

After gazing horrified into this gloomy vault for several minutes he at length made out a rat, which presently came to the opening and sniffed and stared at him.

"My God ! My God !" cried the priest, "Can it be possible ?"

And then, after a pause—

"To think that yon coffin in its sepulchre is the summit of honour and reverence to the dead, compared with the nameless fate that awaited her poor bones. Not even a five-year tenancy of a niche, not even a stone, not even a separate mound ! Thrown to corruption in the grinning earth, not for duty's sake, but merely because it is not meet that human bones should rot and fester in the highway as do the bones of animals and fish."

After a while he grew used to the poisonous air. He compelled himself to breathe it, and, though white as a ghost, he took the handkerchief from his face. Seeking another corner of the graveyard he paused and looked upon the ground.

"This should be the place !" he muttered. "Here she lies, one amongst a score, where I should lie beside her ! My corpse should have lain there first for her poor corpse to fall across. Oh ! the horror of it !"

He sank upon his knees. First he prayed to Heaven for forgiveness, then he looked down and spoke to the putrid earth.

"Poor partner of my sin, soon may I be suffering the same ignominy of corruption ! God knows that I little dreamed what fate awaited thee ! I had

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pictured thee a merry wanton—God forgive me!—with gold to spend and silk to wear. Lo! This stern picture that God's finger silently points me out to look upon. Let Him punish me bitterly for my sin of base neglect! Now my eyes are opened, now too late I see that the things we have left undone are yet more awful than the things that we have done. Perhaps it was Heaven's will that I should only be spared to look on this my handiwork before my own obliteration. So be it!"

* * * * *

He was very moved. Gradually he became calmer, closed his eyes again in prayer, then, rising from his knees, he left the cemetery, looking back with horror and contrition once or twice, his face still ashen.

"The dead!" he exclaimed as he went towards the beach, descending the rocky staircase on the face of the little cliff. "Alas! On this side of purgatory what can I do? Even masses——"

He bitterly shook his head.

Trudging over the shingle towards that flat portion of the land where the beach is but little lower than the village, Padre Ignacio took more than half an hour to reach the point where two groups of fishermen were pulling in the nets.

With his hands behind his back he wandered to and fro, his eyes lighting upon every one in turn. There were many loungers present, drawn by curiosity, and nobody paid attention to the priest, for that critical moment had arrived when the excited fishermen hauled in the belly of the net, singing, dancing and shouting. This morning they had a miraculous draught of fishes, in spite of the evil eye upon them, and those who had muttered curses on the priest

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when they saw him approach (for priests are unlucky when the nets are coming in) now forgot him and helped the Prowman and Basket Captains to gather up the wriggling boquerónes.

Of all eyes there present Padre Ignacio's were the only pair that never once looked upon the draught of fishes. Over and over again he was saying to himself, "Yonder is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh."

And his gaze was riveted upon the face of El Chopo, who was watching the little crowd around the net with silent interest.

Presently the fishermen beckoned him to approach, and he led forward his donkey and helped them fill the panniers.

Padre Ignacio, as soon as this took place, hurriedly left the beach and made for the distant road, so that when El Chopo came cantering past upon his donkey the priest waylaid him unseen by the crowd upon the beach.

"Stop!" called the Jesuit, holding up his hand, and the youth, astonished at this unwonted summons, checked his beast and looked at the stranger from head to foot.

"What is your name, lad?"

"El Chopo."

"That is not a Christian name. What do they call you besides?"

"El Chopo, nothing else" (with a shrug of the shoulders).

So long and fixedly did the priest look up into his face that the youth felt somewhat embarrassed. At length Padre Ignacio collected himself and said in as matter-of-fact a way as could be—

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"I am a Jesuit priest and I have met your father. Come to me this evening at the *Fonda del Trini* about six o'clock and bring your brother. I have that to say to both of you that may be of interest. How do you sell your fish?"

The lad paused for a moment with his blue eyes fixed upon the blue eyes of the priest, then answered—

"A real and a half the pound."

"And how many pounds might you be carrying?" said the priest, coming close up to him and never taking his eyes off the boy's face.

"One and a half arrobas, more or less."

"Then how much is the whole lot worth?"

"About fifty-six reals," replied the other, after pausing for half a minute and working his fingers very rapidly.

"Well done!" said the priest. "Then this, I suppose, would pay for it?" and he thrust a golden onza into the lad's hand and strode away.

It was now El Chopo's turn to call a halt.

"I cannot give you change; give me a smaller piece."

"Take it and keep it," called the priest over his shoulder.

"Nay, but where shall I leave your fish?" shouted El Chopo, much concerned.

Padre Ignacio paused, turned round, and came back a step or two. Then, with a smile, and as if a happy idea had just occurred to him, "Take them," said he, "to the schoolmaster of Cinco Caminos. Leave them with my compliments, and beg his acceptance of a present of newly-caught fish."

"And the golden onza?"

"What of it?"

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"What am I to do with so much money?"

"Change it in the town, pay fifty-six reals to the fishermen, and divide what remains between your brother and yourself. Let each buy whatever pleases him best. Till this evening!"

And the good man pursued his way towards the village with a resolution which forbade any further compromise. The lad and the priest passed the day in thinking of each other, and each after his own fashion.

El Chopo was somewhat perplexed, yet filled with a glow of anticipation. He knew that his father had been a gentleman, but never had fully informed himself as to details. Whenever he began to inquire, his questions drew forth answers which were grotesque in their impossibility, for time had daubed truth with a vivid pigment of lies. Those who were hungry for romance whispered in his ear that he was the bye-blow of a prince, whilst those who were ill-disposed swore that the two of them were begotten of the Evil One in the mountains. Few remembered Don Antonio Nieto, and less were certain of his name.

Padre Ignacio, for his part, climbed up the road that wends past the Jesuit College (then deserted), and seating himself in the shade of an olive tree he gave himself up to a thrill of joyous emotion.

"The eyes," said he, "are mine! The hair is mine! The forehead and nose are mine! The mouth and chin are hers. God! What a handsome youth and what a goodly vision!"

Any one who, passing by, had seen the good man's beaming face would have thought that he had caught a sudden glimpse of Paradise. His features seemed to reflect some heavenly glory. Then passed a cloud and threw its shadow across the hill, and his face grew

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fixed and melancholy as it turned towards a far-off white enclosure, down to the right hand among the maize fields by the sea.

"Yet what right have I to dote upon it? Is it not my sin? What was I saying only an hour ago?" He shuddered and turned pale at the thought of yonder horror.

"But who is to know? Who is to guess that Sir Priest is no other than Sir Hypocrite? This is a cloak that might cover a multitude of sins!

"Nay, for shame! There are other eyes and ears than those of humanity, if what we learn be true; and even were there none, am I so fallen away from grace as deliberately to accept such pitiful conditions? Shall I steal freely of all fruit save that which the gardener has his eyes upon? Poor, roguish Flesh, born with the instinct to err! If only Conscience lose sight of him for an instant, in that instant he has damned himself and Conscience too. Why, then, did the Almighty box up Conscience in so miserable a shell?

"Come, let us examine into it. Here are three paths to choose from.

"*First*, to avoid this pretty youth as though he were a thief. That were cowardly, despicable, and even monstrous. Alas! I have shown enough neglect already, and what terrible havoc it has wrought! What right have I to avoid him? Have I not done him as bitter wrong as a father may do to his son? And if so, I should atone, I should place my well-being, my very life, at his service, regardless of all consequences to myself. No! To avoid him is impossible. God forbid!

"*Second*, to satisfy my new-born longing for the

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boy, and honestly to rejoice in that which the Lord has seen fit to give me. To what end? For my own selfish gratification? That I may gloat over the outcome of my sin? That I may forget, in the joy of possessing him, the beggary, misery and death that have been paid by another as his price? And *does* the Lord give him to me? Does He hold this forth as my reward for the offence which I have committed in His sight? Does He not rather give *me* to the lad for what I am worth? Give *him* to *me*, indeed! Why, this is a yet more foolish hypothesis than the first.

"*Third*, neither to seek him nor avoid him. To be with him only to aid him. To give him the assistance of my poor knowledge. To atone, so far as I may, for the injury I did him in begetting him. To tear myself away from him whenever I find that I am merely gratifying my own instincts without rendering him good service. For he is the outcome of my sin, and woe unto the man that rejoices in the fruits of his own crime!"

Anon the sun burst forth in boisterous merriment, and a muleteer down below in the King's highway let loose his soul in song.

"She is one and I am one:

Two were one an they had wed.

Since her vows have come to nought,

One and one are two instead."¹

A grasshopper hard by listened in silence to this sentiment, then loudly chirped approval, as who should say the case was just his own.

These cheerful developments made themselves felt by the Jesuit, and so subtle is the essence of a sun-

¹ From the Spanish.

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beam that he shook off his heaviness and yielded to pleasant fancies.

"‘Sin,’ said I! If this gallant youth be sin, why, Sin is not so ugly as I thought him. Sin should wear a more forbidding aspect, should go blear-eyed, hunch-backed and hobbling, with a bill, ‘Know all men by these presents.’ But *this* child of sin fills me with gladness, and his face almost—‘almost,’ I say—rebukes me for rebuking myself. God cannot mean me to lament the bringing into being so brave a creature, else, surely, He had never lent His face to his conception. And if God forbid me not, why not rejoice?"

Then his thoughts, returning to the woman and the penalty she had paid, plunged him once more into bitterness; anon he grew light-hearted once again, and thus his mood went see-saw up and down, so great was the stirring up that the sight of the lad had given him.

When evening came Padre Ignacio stood awaiting the two boys at the entrance to the *Fonda del Trini*.

He led them in through the *Fonda* and out at the back, with a hand on the shoulder of each, and made them sit at the table on either side of him, barefooted though they were.

"So this is your brother?" he asked, looking hard at Peláo. "And what have you bought with your money, both of you?"

El Chopo had bought himself a new pair of breeches and a spelling book.

"That," said the priest approvingly, "combines utility and instruction."

Peláo had bought himself a knife, a pistol, and a pound of lollipops.

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"That," remarked their host, "is a combination of strength and sweetness, and puts me in mind of Samson and the lion."

"Who was Samson?" asked El Chopo.

"A mighty man of valour, who slew thousands of men with the jawbone of an ass."

"Do you believe it?"

"¡Hombre!" returned the Jesuit, looking at him with much curiosity, "such a thing is possible."

The lad met his gaze, intent upon gathering his convictions. Peláo, for his part, sat there like a log of wood, being utterly abashed.

Not so El Chopo, who seemed to lack self-consciousness. His interest in the whole world external to himself was indeed so powerful that he spent not a moment in useless introspection at that age (being about fifteen), and perhaps he thought that others were much the same.

Both of the lads were tall and well developed, and certainly El Chopo looked more like a man than a boy, yet in virtue of a natural grace of person he never entered the class of hobble-de-hoys. Peláo could not claim such exemption.

This contrast between the two was easily noticeable throughout the meal. Thus it was that though both of them employed their fingers pretty liberally, El Chopo, after a while, seeing forks were more in fashion, made shift to use one. Peláo, on the other hand, managed to smear himself with gravy up to the eyes, and furtively wiped his hands below on the tablecloth, so that the innkeeper's wife, who was easily upset, burst into tears when they showed her the havoc he had wrought and the slit he had made with his knife in sawing through the bread.

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The plates, however, he very much appreciated, and deftly manipulated them to hide his evil deeds, not foreseeing the moment when the landlord would whisk them away and leave him to face his many-coloured guilt.

During the meal Padre Ignacio plied the lads with questions, eating but little himself and keenly watching his guests whenever their attention was taken by the well-served dinner-table.

When, however, the cloth was cleared and novelty, like bashfulness, had given way to use, El Chopo proved himself no meagre questioner.

"You said you had seen my father?"

"Yes."

"What was he like?"

"Your father," said Padre Ignacio, "was—tall and strong, his face was a very middling one, much like any other face one meets in a day's march."

"What sort of man was he?"

"Why, since you ask me, lad, your father—was neither here nor there. There have been worse men and many better."

"You did not like him?"

"Nay, I assure you I liked him very well."

"Is he dead?"

"Dead! Why, look you, as to that, now, my news of him is none of the newest. I think it were safer to reckon him dead."

"Why did he leave my mother?"

During this catechism the good priest had been getting more and more uncomfortable, drumming on the table with his fingers and looking uneasily around him. At this point he rose from where he sat and gave one or two turns up and down the *parral*.

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When he came back he allowed no time for repetition of the question, but, leaning forward upon the table with folded arms, said to them very pleasantly—

“And now let me tell you why you are here to-night. Your father having been a good friend to the Jesuits, and I myself having an hour a day to spare for the next few months, I bethought me that perhaps I might return a little kindness in such ways as lay in my power. I am no magician, I cannot say ‘Presto!’ and bring you a bag of jewels, nor wave a magic wand and turn half a dozen lizards into prancing horses, but so long as your wishes are modest, who knows but what I may help you (be it ever so small an aid) towards their fulfilment.

“There is a proverb which says, ‘God helps him who gets up betimes in the morning.’ Which means, that even did it lie in my power to do much for you, still it would avail you little unless you did more for yourselves.

“And now, enough of preaching—what would each of you like to be?”

The boys, very much astonished, were silent. Peláo had only partly understood the pure Castilian, but El Chopo had followed it word for word.

“Speak and be not afraid,” said Padre Ignacio, smiling, “You know that ‘Brother Modest never became a Prior.’”

At length said El Chopo—

“I should like to learn to read and write, and then to travel.”

And Peláo, understanding the issue by this sample and being much emboldened, chimed in—

“And I—I should like to be a bull-fighter.”

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"¡Valgame Dios!" cried Padre Ignacio, laughing; "what a difference in tastes!"

But El Chopo's answer had pleased him very well.

"What is the good," cried El Chopo, looking scornfully upon his brother, "of making oneself a spectacle in public and running away in pink breeches from an angry bull?"

"And what is the good," retorted Peláo, "of learning to read and write, and sitting in a corner mum when there's something better to do?"

"But without reading, without knowledge of any kind, it is difficult to travel and enjoy oneself," objected the priest, "and before we have done with each other I hope to show good reasons why knowledge should be the first stepping stone towards any end whatever that is worthy of our zeal.

"Knowledge opens our eyes and makes us see more clearly. Things wear a different aspect for those who have education.

"Who would believe, for instance, that this bottle of water before us has thousands upon thousands of living beings concealed in it, each one swimming rapidly hither and thither, scores of them disporting in the space of a caraway seed, yet never jostling one another?

"Who would believe that there are lands where for months and months dark night prevails, and for months and months the sun is ever shining?

"Who would believe that there are fountains of water that rise from the earth so boiling hot that an ox might be boiled alive in them, and fountains of oil which, once set alight, burn without ceasing, and make themselves seen over hundreds and hundreds of miles?

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"Who would believe there are people that live underground, horses that toil in mines and have never seen light for years, carriages that rush onward without any horses at all, men that fly upward in baskets and lose themselves over the clouds?"

"Yet all these things I know, through being able to read."

The two lads had followed his words with much interest.

El Chopo was silently enraptured, and could not take his eyes off the Jesuit's countenance.

Peláo let loose a most profane expression of surprise, and then rapped out another that was worse, to keep it company.

Padre Ignacio looked upon him reproachfully, but without the least effect, for Peláo was quite ignorant that this mode of venting admiration was at all unwelcome, and indeed it was the only thing he had done that evening which had not preyed upon his conscience.

This incident appeared to suggest something further to the priest, for presently he said—

"Not only do I propose to read to you of all these things and to teach you to read yourselves, but there are other matters of far greater weight which must be thought about. Do you know, boy, who He is that you have named?"

So meaningless was the oath that Peláo did not think he had referred to any one.

"Look you, everything must have a beginning. Who do you suppose made all things in the beginning?"

"How should *I* know," said Peláo, shrugging his brown shoulders as if it were none of his business. But El Chopo said "Ah!" and nodded his head at the

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Jesuit as much as to say that it was not the first time this problem had been before him.

"What becomes of us when we die?" continued the priest.

"Pues señor, you have only to walk in the cemetery and your nose will tell you," replied Peláo convincingly, and pointing towards the graveyard on the cliff.

"That is what happens to the body, my child. But have you never heard of the soul?"

"Yes," said El Chopo, coming to the rescue; "I have heard the priest speak about it, but I cannot follow what he says."

"Then," answered the Jesuit, "I have books which will tell us much about it. I have books which tell how the whole world was made by God and all that happened many thousands of years ago. I propose that you come to me four or five evenings in the week, that you breakfast with me once or twice, and sometimes in the daytime when the water is rough we will sit out in the open with our books. And before a year has passed, I'll warrant you will both of you feel astonished at the wonderful things you had never dreamt about."

Much more did the good priest say to them in addition, and when they departed even Peláo had made up his mind to learn.

As for El Chopo, the seed had fallen in his heart and was destined to bring forth—what fruit? For there be some fruit that is wholesome, some that is deadly.

* * * * *

As time passed on, Padre Ignacio continued to perform the duties that had been assigned to him in Cinco Caminos and Santa Fe, and such was the tact that he exhibited, so quiet and irresistible was his

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manner, that before very long the people had ceased to regard the Jesuits as children of the Evil One, and the neighbourhood was quite ready to tolerate their presence once again.

One day the Bishop of Santa Fe himself came down in state to the Padre's humble lodging in Cinco Caminos and loaded him with ignorant condescension under which the Jesuit groaned inwardly, but received it with placid smiles of gratitude.

At last it became known that the Company of Jesús had been invited back to Spain and honoured with great distinctions in Salamanca and elsewhere, and all eyes in Santa Fe were centred upon the empty college on the hill-side. On Sunday afternoons the *Fonda del Trini* reaped quite a little harvest from people who had prolonged their walk in that direction, being anxious to observe whether the college yet showed any signs of life, and for a short season it became quite the fashion to go "first to the bull-fight and then to the Jesuits."

These anticipations were quite warranted.

For many months beforehand Padre Ignacio and Don Ramón González had been accustomed to pay almost daily visits to the college, and many were the bad quarters of an hour they gave to Tío Patas for his negligence and shortcomings. But Tío Patas was not cursed with sensitive feelings, and looked down his long nose with an air that was very like indifference and shrugged his round shoulders over the unpruned vines and weedy flower-beds, putting out his hands and crying, "What would you? With only two men to help me, one of them deaf and dumb, and the other three parts an idiot!" For both his assistants had been "recommended."

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Soon there arose a great beating of hammers and grunting of saws, which was audible right down in Cinco Caminos, and it transpired that over twenty workmen were busy up in the college preparing for the great home-coming of the exiles.

Forthwith many applicants for work began to wait upon Padre Ignacio, bearing letters of recommendation from all manner of men of high degree. Each workman thus accredited was an inevitable source of offence to his patron if the Jesuit refused him employment, and inasmuch as there were half a dozen of the "choicest, most accomplished and most trustworthy" artisans seated on a bench outside the fonda every morning before Padre Ignacio was awake, the band of workers up in the college soon swelled from twenty to eighty, and woe the day when they had to be dismissed!

In due time the Jesuits arrived, and Padre Ignacio gave up his lodging at the *Fonda del Trini*, and parted good friends with his host and hostess. To the former he gave a handsome silver snuff box, to the latter a silken shawl of Manila, and these good people would never hear evil spoken of the Jesuits from the day when they first heard Padre Ignacio's voice. Soon afterwards it transpired that he was Padre Rector of the college, and all that knew him wished him well in this high office.

From the time when Padre Ignacio first met the boys they never knew what it was to go hungry and in rags, though he did not at first attempt to lift them above their calling as fisher lads, saying that Simon and John and Andrew had been fishermen before them. But one morning Padre Ignacio summoned the two boys to the college, and meeting them

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in the orchard, said kindly to Peláo, with his hand upon his head—

“My child, would you like to be better clothed and educated, to live in a fine house in Madrid and become a gentleman?”

Peláo opened his eyes very wide indeed.

“Your father,” continued the priest, “is not dead after all. He is growing old, and he bids me send you to him.”

“And me?” asked El Chopo.

The priest winced.

“Do you really wish to leave me, then?” asked Padre Ignacio with a smile.

El Chopo thought for a while.

“Nay, it is not that!” he answered with a sigh, “but the hard life one leads, and the fine sights and great cities that Peláo is going to see.”

“I will make thee forget them,” said the priest, and having first looked around him, he embraced the lad.

So Peláo departed and El Chopo remained behind.

* * * * *

For several years there happened but little in Santa Fe to interest outsiders, and the good people went on amusing themselves according to their wont. Their life was free from turmoil, and it even lacked incident, but it was uncursed by the demon of modernity and therefore it was good to live.

It must not be imagined, however, that one's actions in Santa Fe in those days were without restraint. There were unwritten laws of custom which had to be obeyed.

Given a certain hour and time of year, tell me, moreover, if the moon is at the full, and I will inform you to a nicety what promenade you should be walking

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after sunset and even which side to go upon. After the siesta, during which the watermen have sprinkled the scorching gravel with their hose, you may walk along the mole. At night, the clatter of the dominoes on the marble tables of the *Círculo de Levante*, and, behind the scenes, gambling at cards around a long green baize table. This is forbidden by the law, but—
“What is one to do?”

Each new Civil Governor, when he assumes office, pays a “surprise” visit to all clubs to put down gambling; but first he sends his card, one day beforehand, and when he appears, with eye severe and beard of formal cut, he can find no games but chess and dominoes, and so reports. This is not without its due reward. There was a rustle of silk and percal every evening after six along the Alameda and a display of pretty feet in net-worked stockings. Sandalled slippers had not altogether fallen out of fashion and the Spanish *basquiña* or upper petticoat was still to be seen, although it had already commenced its descent from those of high degree. On feast days after high mass, and on moonlight nights, the promenade would be extended beyond the Alameda and would reach right across the Arroyo in the direction of *Cinco Caminos*, some even passing the barber’s shop where the priest, the schoolmaster, the mayor and several others could be seen gesticulating at one another by the light of the shaving lamp, which, indeed, was the only decent lamp in *Cinco Caminos* and attracted a multitude of moths, two-legged and otherwise.

Many were the families, even in *Sante Fe*, that walked abroad for hours to save the expense of lamp oil. Doña María Lopez, the widow of a captain, with

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three handsome daughters, how could *she*, for instance, keep a light in every window on ninety-five pounds a year?

Nevertheless, her girls were as well dressed as any of them, for a Spaniard looks to appearances first, and provisions the larder afterwards. If the house is to be stinted anywhere be sure it will be the dining-room that suffers, and so long as the receiving room is made attractive the kitchen and larder may wait for better times. Some households, indeed, were without knives and forks, these being sent in with the meal twice daily from an adjacent fonda, and this "full service" was rendered for less than two shillings a day to the godly, but to those who would not go meatless during Lent, nor fast as they should do at various other seasons the tariff was somewhat higher. And it is but right that wickedness should be taxed.

People like the widow and her daughters could not even pay for the "servicio" from the fonda, for mighty little arithmetic will show you that four people at two shillings each per diem would soon make a hole in £95, and even on half rations (which is the way that many worked it) the surplus for general expenses would be but a meagre one.

But garbanzos (or chick peas) cost little more in those days than a penny a pound, and a pound of garbanzos well boiled, with a little cabbage, a farthing's worth of red sausage (or chorizo), a like amount of salt pig's fat, and a mere suspicion of garlic makes a stew that is savoury and satisfying. It will easily content three laughing girls, who think nothing of their stomachs but a great deal of their bonnets, and have spent all the morning in turning Lola's summer dress of a year ago and making it look

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like new. This newness, be sure, will not deceive the quick eyes of the doctor's girls, their rivals, who will probably make such cruel fun of the effort to-night upon the Alameda, though cooing sweet courtesies the while, that Lola will go home in tears. To-morrow it will be Concha's turn to run the gauntlet, and Concha perhaps is to wear a resurrection of her mother's wedding gown which has lain at the bottom of a trunk for twenty years. This no doubt will puzzle the doctor's girls, but the kitchen maid will soon unravel the thread, and alas for poor Concha's feelings when she meets them! For those laughing black eyes are terrible things to meet, for man or woman, in love or war.

Sunday, of course, was the one great day in the week save when a greater feast day eclipsed it. After the bull-fight there would be a procession of carriage folk and pedestrians along the main road that skirts the bull ring and joins Santa Fe to Cinco Caminos. There, indeed, beauty outvied itself. Faces surrounded by black mantillas, by crimson, or by white; black hair adorned with red carnations and with yellow rosebuds, eyes that invited one then turned away, lips that spoke coyly and fans that spoke freely, the same may be seen to-day.

Now this was a sight that pleased El Chopo mightily. The lad was too young to be moved by women's glances, and though many a dainty señorita looked towards his handsome face and lusty young form he met the glance unflinching and unconscious. It was the beauty and picturesqueness of the scene that really attracted him.

The theatre, on moonless nights, was the only proper rendezvous for ladies who looked to the propri-

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eties. In those days, just as in our own, the night watchmen of Santa Fe, being allowed a certain amount of lamp oil per post, were in the habit of selling what portion of this total they considered could easily be dispensed with.

The result was that the *serrenos* of largest families were those whose lamps were soonest extinguished, and if one chanced upon a lamp that burned till midnight one concluded that the *serreno* of that street was neither saving up money for the future, battling with arrears of the past, nor wasting his present substance in riotous living.

This is not a secret and illicit double dealing. It is the acknowledged perquisite of men who are scarcely ever paid. This being so, the Alcalde of Santa Fe cannot well discharge a *serreno* whose lamps have gone out too early. He will call him aside, and taking him by the button, will say to him very decently, "Friend, there are complaints that your street is dark after nine. It is not that I care one whit, nor wish to disparage your services, no one esteems you more highly, but after all there are certain decencies to be observed and—without offence—you were paid off half your arrears last Monday week ; so that, look you, half an hour or so more lamplight is a matter you might very well concede. And what calls my attention most is that all your lamps go out together. Now, of six lamps, it were better for three to go out at eight and three at ten, than all of them at nine, for it needs but a spark of light to remind a man of his conscience, and a street full of darkness is at best a sore temptation and a matter that might any day end with your reputation."

CHAPTER X

"If good, why do I yield to that suggestion,
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair?"

MACBETH.

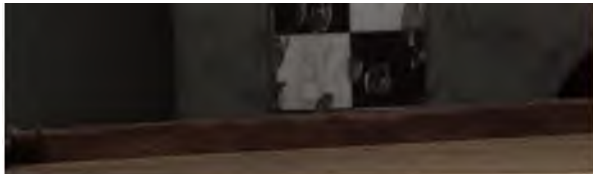
AT the hour of the siesta, one day in August, Don Ramón González climbed up the hill towards the Jesuit College. Entering from the road, he passed a massive door in a yet more massive wall, and, climbing ten steps, found himself in an avenue of palms. These palms were half a century old, and, looking from the college doorsteps, they shaped a framework round a patch of azure sea, in the foreground the buff-coloured path of gravel, at the top a piece of sky in keeping with the sea.

Sometimes a dove-like falucha would place itself in the centre of this picture, or a big lizard would suddenly shoot along the little world's end of gravel path where (seen from the college) it drew a line across the distant water far below, and with these touches of life the picture was such as to compel the stranger to halt when he left the threshold.

Having passed along this avenue, the porch of the college stood in front, approached by three stone steps, and on either side of the porch was a luxuriant mass of jasmine.

To Don Ramón González the heavy oak door opened of its own accord, and without crying "Open Sesame!"

This did not puzzle him, for those who were ad-



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mitted by the aid of this phenomenon knew that the two masses of jasmine covered two iron-barred windows, and at one of these windows sat a watchful novice with the cord of the latch brought over pulleys to a ring beside his desk, and every time that any one came in or went out, he paused from his reading, and, glancing at a clock above the desk, made a swift entry in a note-book.

Don Ramón sought the study of the Father Rector, which was on the first floor behind the college and overlooking the orchard.

A white marble table resting on spiral legs of ebony stood in the centre, and on it were writing materials and books.

There were easy chairs for visitors, upholstered in crimson plush, and even a couch of the same material. A pair of curtains covered an alcove where the priest had his bed, and an oil lamp on the table with a green shade suggested that the good father might sometimes resign himself to wakefulness when sleep was not to be courted, and seating himself at the table, might pore over his books until the small hours of the morning, then back to his bed, thankful for fatigue, and listening to the croaking of the frogs as it grew fainter and fainter; then blessed oblivion; then a bell; then cruel reality, dawn, work and matins, and another day's pilgrimage through a desert of diplomacy and commonplaces.

On the left hand wall hung a cage in which was a singing partridge; beyond it was the alcove.

On the right hand wall was a large crucifix, and on either side of the crucifix a bookcase. The books were for the most part in French.

Padre Ignacio looked up suddenly from a manu-

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script when the visitor opened the door. Another priest was standing beside his chair.

"Ah, my dear Don Ramón," exclaimed the Rector, rising, "so you are back again from Madrid! Welcome indeed! And how are you?"

"None too well," replied the blunt old countryman, after saluting the two priests and passing one hand round his back and hips to indicate the trouble. "I fear that this malady will make an end of me before another twelve months."

"My dear old friend, we must not speak like that," said the Rector encouragingly, and patting him on the shoulders. "We must not speak so hopelessly!"

"Well, I have tried all things. Your own Padre Bermejo, the court physicians at Madrid—all to no purpose. Some tell me to go to the springs at Marmolejo, or the springs at Arriate, but I have no faith in springs. If it be God's will that I must die soon, why die I must, in His good time, and so long as I die in Santa Fe I will be satisfied."

The Rector sat down beside his old friend and rested his hand upon his arm, speaking to him with a sympathy that was almost affectionate, and offering to wager that he himself would be taken before old Don Ramón.

"Well, if you win," replied the other, laughing, "I hardly see how it will profit you, my dear Padre!"

The two became very merry over this simple joke. Meanwhile the black eyes of the other priest were fixed upon them as though studying some interesting subject. His face was absolutely without sympathy for either speaker, and even when he smiled he did so mechanically and just sufficiently to avoid being conspicuous by his coldness. This detachment of Padre

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Martinez from the human influences around him was at times almost painful, for nobody could ignore it, and the more one yielded to impulse or emotion, the more inscrutable did his judgment of those impulses become.

His chin was square, his mouth with decision in the corners, his nose slightly aquiline and rather prominent. The face altogether was a powerful one. When relieved by a smile it was not without attraction, but it utterly lacked repose, for so eager and watchful were the twinkling black eyes that it was difficult for one to look at Padre Martinez and imagine his appearance when asleep. This priest came from the busy commercial region of Cataluña, where energy at times breaks out into rebellion. In his heart he despised the slow life of Santa Fe.

"Well! well!" said Don Ramón presently, cutting short the conversation on personal topics as he met the eyes of this priest, "enough of aches and pains! You are in the midst of your books as usual, I see."

"Ah, they are very good friends," replied the Rector, "very good friends indeed! And—you have brought us news?"

"Sealed packages!" said González shortly, placing two upon the table.

The Rector glanced at the handwriting of the outer covers and opened each packet in turn, asking his visitor's indulgence whilst he perused them.

"In cypher, Padre Martinez, the cypher of last year, I think. Will you transcribe it for me?"

Padre Ignacio handed to the other priest one of the documents taken from the second package. Padre Martinez seated himself at the table without

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replying, took up a pen and commenced to write. Don Ramón González sat watching Padre Martinez, whose massive features seemed to have a fascination for him.

The latter, whilst he pursued his task, lifted his eyes occasionally towards the Rector, and no movement that the Rector made seemed to escape him. Especially watchful did he appear when Padre Ignacio, after scanning some document or other, placed it on one side. At length the Rector concluded his reading, and only two of the documents, which seemed to be routine reports, were handed to his brother priest. As for the remainder, they were secured under lock and key by the Rector, who rose with a sigh and placed them in a drawer under the left-hand bookcase. From this drawer he moved towards a spirit lamp on the other side of the room and lighted the wick over which hung a silvered kettle.

"So you will see, my dear Padre Martinez," said the Rector, coming back to his seat, "that this agitation is no child's play."

"It should never have been allowed to ripen," replied the other priest vehemently.

"How should it be prevented?" asked the Rector, with a smile.

"By nipping it in the bud."

"Look now," said Padre Ignacio, waving his hand airily towards his subordinate, "at our zealous root and branch, man! And, mind you, it is possible that he is in the right. Oh, *quite* possible! But for the life of me, my dear Don Ramón, I cannot see how violent measures should profit us. And remember, my dear Padre Martinez, that that same frost, where-with we would nip this bud, must nip many another

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bud that grows alongside and would bring us most glorious fruit."

"Moreover," said González, "one violent blow can scarcely be wiped out by a thousand kind caresses. I am of your mind, if I may speak about it. Skill is better than force."

"You speak," replied Padre Martinez, with a short vexed laugh, "as though I were proposing to chop off a dozen heads."

"Well, you see what the Provincial advised," said the Rector, rising with a sigh, and preparing to make coffee.

"You did not show me his letter," replied Padre Martinez.

"Tut! A mere oversight! I *meant* to shew it to you. You shall have it in a moment. In a moment! As soon as I have poured out—, Look! Are there three coffee cups or only two?"

Padre Martinez stooped down beside the cupboard and returned to the table with three cups and saucers. The Rector came forward with the coffee, went back for a bowl of sugar and some spoons, then unlocked the drawer again, and after turning over some letters, he placed one of them in front of the other priest. Don Ramón offered the Rector a cigarette, and the two shared a spill which nearly went out whilst they disputed as to who should light first. Padre Martinez, who had refused the proffered tobacco case with a bow, continued poring over the letter and frowning attentively. All three persons remained in conversation for fully two hours; in fact, the dying sun was already crimsoning the leaves of the Jesuit's orchard, when Don Ramón González, turning to the Rector during a pause, said to him meaningly, "I have also some personal news for you, of some importance."

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At these words Padre Martinez, in duty bound, pushed away his chair and rose to go. When he turned his back upon the others a slight shadow as of jealousy or vexation might have been seen upon his face. When he had closed the door González went on—

"I hardly know whether I have done right in worrying you with so much business to-day, for I am the bearer of ill news. I have kept it until the last, for I felt sure that you would be equal to nothing else afterwards."

"I will try to control myself," replied the Rector. "I am a poor old man, but my early discipline has not as yet forsaken me. What is your news?"

"It is a message from a dying man."

"From a dying man?"

The Rector looked at him expectantly.

"Forgive me," González went on, somewhat bluntly, "for bringing you such ill tidings. Don Antonio, your brother, is dead."

Padre Ignacio turned very pale and rose suddenly from his chair.

"He heard that I was in Madrid and sent for me. The closing hours of his life were very pitiful."

"What, *poverty*? My brother dying in poverty?"

"No, surrounded by every comfort, but in abject fear—of a woman. The tale is a long one. Don Antonio's life—where is the good of hiding it?—was intemperate, and he paid a bitter penalty. At the time when most men are in their prime, he fell into a state of dotage, and lost his strength of body and of mind. To tell you the truth I thought when last I saw him, only two years ago, that this would come to pass, but the swiftness of the change is awful, too awful for me to tell you."

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"God rest his soul," said the Rector, who had been standing beside his chair. But his eyes were fixed upon Don Ramón as if in still greater dread of something yet to come.

"They tell me," said González," that he babbled the wildest nonsense, said the strangest things to those around him."

"As what, for instance?" asked the Rector, in a faint voice.

"Well—I was not with him when he breathed his last," replied the other, leaning forward in his chair, "but I will tell you a strange thing he said to me. I went to see him the day before he died. 'What,' said I, 'has become of the lad?' Whereat he stared at me, then sat up in bed and laughed. 'My friend,' said he, 'are you *too* in this tremendous joke?' I looked at him astonished, and he looked back at me, for a long time, whilst one might say a credo, then he fell back again. 'I am not mad,' says he, 'but I will tell you a true word, González, for old acquaintance sake, the Devil stands hard by the Crucifix.' What do you make of that now?"

Don Ramón looked across at the Rector with a face which, though somewhat puzzled, was certainly innocent of guile.

"I cannot understand it," said the Rector, in a voice unnaturally calm. "Did he confess before he died?"

"Alas, he died unshriven!"

When Padre Ignacio heard these words a quick gleam (as if of hope or triumph or relief) flashed from his eyes, but so rapidly was it succeeded by an expression of bitterness and disgust that the keenest observer had hardly noticed it. Whence came that loathing

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that disfigured the Rector's lips? Was it born of inward contemplation?

"Tell me," said Padre Ignacio, "what actually happened to Peláo?"

"I found out," replied González, "from the people of the house, that the young man volunteered in an infantry regiment, just two years after he left Santa Fe. He is now in Filipinas, so they say."

"Then—my brother did not fulfil his promise to the lad?"

"On the contrary. They seemed to have agreed but poorly from the first, he and Don Antonio. In the end, so it is said, Don Antonio bade him leave the house. There were many idle explanations of the event. Some contended (here González frowned as if the subject disgusted him) that the youth was too much in favour with this woman; others——"

"Did you see this woman?"

"Aye! A magnificent despot, with murder written upon her forehead, so I thought! There were others said that this was only a quarter of the truth, that there was something else."

"What else?"

"Nobody seemed to know," said González, shrugging his shoulders. "Faith! It is a mystery!"

The Rector heaved a deep sigh.

"But I am forgetting the chief part of all this mystery," continued the visitor, speaking more cheerfully and feeling in his inner pocket. "I have here a sealed letter for you, written by Don Antonio a week or two before he died, and informing you, no doubt, of what is already becoming common knowledge."

"Tell me," said the Rector, reaching out his hand.

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"Don Antonio, after providing for this woman (much good may it do her!) and settling all his debts, has left the remainder of his fortune to El Chopo, your nephew and favourite pupil."

The Rector in his surprise almost let fall the package; then, placing it with the others upon the table, he stood looking at his visitor, brushing back the white locks from his forehead with his right hand.

"You are surprised? Aye, but you would have been still more surprised had you seen the change in him. What a bonny man he was in his day! What a boisterous jovial fellow, and at the last—nothing but bitter gibes."

"There is surely some misunderstanding!" said the Rector at last.

"That he should leave his money to our young friend here in Santa Fe?"

"Aye! There is some mistake!"

"Read your letter!" suggested Don Ramón briefly, pointing towards the table.

"No!" replied the Rector, with sudden emphasis, and then, as though feeling that he had acted strangely, he composed himself and continued with more calmness, "I would rather open this message from the dead—some other time."

"I think," said González, rising and taking up his hat, "that you would naturally prefer to open it alone. That would be my own feeling. And, my dear Padre, you must know how much it pains me to bring such unwelcome news to a dear old friend, and one whom I so lovingly respect."

The Rector, trying to smile, took the hand of González in his own, but González, after returning his

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kindly pressure, bowed his head and kissed the Jesuit's hand, then left him without another word.

Then at length Padre Ignacio stood alone, the unopened letter in his hand, gazing at Antonio's handwriting upon the envelope.

"Dare I open it?" said he. "Dare I once more look back upon the past, the past that lies buried—yonder in the little cemetery?"

He drew towards the balcony and opened the persianas.

"What mystery of mysteries is this, of which I hold the key between my fingers? Antonio, filled with longing for his son, surely this was strange enough in itself! But yet we are all one clay. Tell me, grim mountains that smile down upon human foibles from such a height and distance, what then is this enigma? Antonio casting out his own flesh and blood and conferring his riches upon his brother's son? Is this a mockery?"

When at length the Rector opened the letter he read these words—

"Brother Priest, thou art a cuckoo, but thou shalt foist no fledgeling into my nest at least. Let other men, more stupid than Antonio, nurture thy offspring if they choose. '*My son, that was sent to me, is thine.*' My money has been left to one that is named El Chopo. If he be your child, so much the better should you be pleased. Pray for my soul, Brother Hypocrite, for no other priest shall pray for me, I swear."

The Rector prayed long and earnestly before his

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crucifix. He prayed for the soul of Antonio. He reviled himself and accused himself of the wreaking of all this bitter mockery. The ruin, starvation, misery and death of an innocent woman he cast upon himself. The misfortunes of her children, the misjudgment of Antonio, all these he looked upon as calamities which his sin had brought to pass. Darkness fell upon the room and found him still in prayer. There was a knocking at the stout panels of the chestnut door, but he failed to hear it. Then a novice raised the great iron latch and came in with a silver candlestick and a lighted candle in either hand. The breeze from the orchard blew the open letter from beside the Rector. It fluttered across the room and rustled against the feet of the novice.

Padre Ignacio rose swiftly from his knees.

"What is the meaning of this sudden intrusion? Why did you not knock?"

"I knocked three times, Father," answered the frightened novice. It was the first time that he had ever heard the Rector speak so angrily.

"Look!" cried the Rector, glaring awfully towards the lad's feet. "What is that? My God! Have you—. No, no! I forbid you to touch it. Pick up the candles again. Place them both upon the table and leave the room.—Stay!"

The novice turned back. The Rector came towards him and rested one hand upon his shoulder.

"Did you hear aught when you came in?"

"Nothing."

"Did you hear me praying?"

"No. I did not think that you were here."

"It is a pity," said the Rector slowly, releasing the novice, "for you would have heard an

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honest prayer. I would you had stood behind me the while."

When he had closed the door and shot the bolt he drew his hand across his forehead, then, picking up the letter, he held it in the flame of one of the candles and watched it burn to the last atom, scorching his fingers, and muttering, "Ah, thou poor lump of clay! Wert thou aught else than clay, this same letter, within an hour of opening, had been nailed to the college notice-board. Is it then God's true will that this wealth should fall to my son? What good can come of it? How quickly the night has gathered, and how foreboding the orchard looks without ever a friendly gleam from the moon behind yon mountains! Dusky whispering trees, waving ill omens towards my balcony, surely there is some presentiment in the very air to-night!"

CHAPTER XI

"And the soul of King David longed to go forth unto Absalom."

2 SAMUEL XIII. 39.

AT the time when El Chopo received the news of his unexpected fortune he could already read and write. He had a good knowledge of history and geography, and was even able to speak a little French, in which language he had studied the Scriptures from a Bible printed in Belgium.

This was not the only French work that he wrestled with, for he waded through a book on geology called *The Earth and What it Teaches Us*, an ancient treatise brought by Padre Ignacio from Paris, and taken from the recesses of his trunk in the days when he sojourned in the *Fonda del Trini*.

It is typical of the lad's intelligence that he undertook this task without the assistance of a dictionary and armed only (in the commencement) with a vocabulary of some thousand words at most.

Every new word he underlined, and, when he had met it in two or three connexions, he took pleasure in assigning it a meaning consistent with all these passages. Sometimes he was wrong, at others he would be baffled by a technicality, and on these occasions he marked the passage for Padre Ignacio's explanation.

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He was now almost a giant, his height being little less than that of his grandfather, the Viracino charcoal-burner.

From helping the fishermen he was taken into the sugar factory of La Aurora and given a post as tally clerk, which brought him a constant wage.

It was his duty to look to the incoming sugar cane and keep count of everything that passed his weigh-bridge. The factory had commenced work again in a most energetic manner since the arrival of the Jesuits.

Nominally, however, it still continued under the management and proprietorship of Don Ramón González, whose house stood on the far side of Santa Fe, with a beautiful little daughter, named Encarnación, just seventeen, who reigned supreme as mistress.

El Chopo never went to the house, Encarnación never came to the sugar factory, yet in the Sunday procession of carriages along the highway after bull-fights their eyes had met.

The girl hardly seemed to glance at his tall figure, walking along the roadside in his plain black clothes, wearing a short braided jacket, a shirt of fine texture, and a broad-brimmed hat, but women receive impressions more rapidly than men. They have but a second allowed them in which to meet the gaze of the other sex, and in that brief interval they have to cast their reckoning. El Chopo, on the other hand, looked at her face with steady admiration.

Yet there happened, what happens sometimes to men and women without their ever knowing it afterwards. They observed each other closely, but unconsciously. How little either of them guessed that among those many faces in the crowded promenade one face had left a secret impression, unseen at present, but

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capable of development like a photographic film, when submitted to certain conditions.

One morning Don Ramón said to El Chopo with a smile as he passed the weighbridge—

“The Father Rector of the College wants to speak to you this evening, and, unless I am mistaken, he has strange news for you.”

In the course of the evening, El Chopo presented himself at the College, and was at once admitted to Padre Ignacio's room.

Closing the door behind him, El Chopo came forward to the priest, who seized him by both hands and spoke very kindly to him. There was a certain light playing in the sympathetic blue eyes of Padre Ignacio, and a fondness in his voice, which refused to be suppressed. These tokens, together with his manner of leaning upon the young man's shoulder, and a dozen trivial symptoms of the kind would have proved to a keen observer that some hidden force was prompting him. Only the priest himself could guess how irresistible it was, for discipline had taught him, through many years, to conceal these feelings in the presence of others.

As for El Chopo, he was so accustomed to what he thought was his uncle's natural kindness and keen sympathy that he never felt any surprise. Padre Ignacio claimed to be his father's brother, and he was El Chopo's oracle, his hero, and almost his divinity.

No difficulty confronted him but what the Jesuit, seating himself by his side, patiently attacked and vanquished it, throwing upon it a light of such purity and brilliance that the pupil would turn from his admiration of the masterpiece to a yet more earnest admiration of the master.

Padre Ignacio was so sympathetic that he was never

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guilty of losing himself in a maze of technicality when expounding a favourite subject. His eyes were constantly turned towards his listener, he watched every transient light and shadow that passed across one's face, and his swift correspondence to one's impressions was so subtle and yet so natural that one seemed to imbibe his meaning from other sources than those dependent upon his expression, his gesture, and his voice. He was gifted, in fact, with a great magnetic power which age and sadness seemed to have developed and matured.

When he explained a difficulty, he used only such words and such similes as his listener was well acquainted with, and when he had concluded one had the impression that a slumbering remembrance had been awakened rather than that anything new and strange had been imparted. Indeed, it was curious that whilst admiring the beauty of some combination of Nature's forces, one wondered that—being so palpable—one had not seen it before. Then, gradually, would come an impression that one had seen it, but forgotten.

His noble face seemed so incapable of deception, his voice so innocent of harshness, that all who came in contact with him were drawn towards him. His novices loved him, his subordinates came into his presence with gratefulness, and when his brow clouded and he used the lash which no one could wield so well and with such dignity, one felt that the sky itself had become obscured, and that a bitter wind was moaning across the vega.

Padre Ignacio did not at first seem anxious to broach the subject which evidently lay before him. With his hands behind his back he paced gently up and down the room, gazing almost moodily towards

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El Chopo, and exchanging remarks upon matters of everyday interest, at times standing in his balcony and looking out upon the orchard. It is possible that he was loth to conclude with the present and to plunge into a future whose course lay in treacherous waters, unknown and unexplored.

When at length El Chopo asked him what news was in the air, the Jesuit replied that there was much news, and very serious news.

"But *good* news?" rejoined El Chopo, with a smile.

"I do not know," said the Jesuit, standing in front of him where he sat. "I cannot tell. It depends so much upon yourself. In the first place your father is dead, which makes a bad beginning."

"I never knew him, I do not remember seeing him; I cannot grieve for him, but I will pray for him," replied the other after a pause.

"All that is very natural," said Padre Ignacio, resuming his walk to and fro. "Had you said less it had been unkind. Had you said more, it would have sounded falsely. The news reached me last night. It is very many years since I saw him, and God rest his soul!"

The Jesuit paused and gazed towards the orchard. There was a tranquil sadness in his voice, which no doubt had been preceded by some emotion during the previous night. Presently he continued—

"His last act was to leave you possessed of more than half his fortune."

When he had pronounced these words, the Jesuit slowly turned his head and looked at the young man's face.

"And my brother?" asked El Chopo after a pause, during which his heart was beating very fast.

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"I do not know. Up to the present we have only heard that he is in Filipinas."

"The remainder will have been left to Peláo, surely?"

"Let us hope that something has been left to him," replied the priest.

"Then," said El Chopo, rising excitedly from where he sat, "I am a rich man!"

"You are, comparatively, a rich man," affirmed Padre Ignacio, and heaved a sigh.

"But, my uncle, will you not rejoice with me?"

"Rejoice that you have found the wings to fly with?" answered the priest, with a wistful smile.

"How, to fly with? If to soar above my present state of ignorance, to attempt such flights of knowledge as I had never hoped for, to have my time my own, to travel into far countries, if all these things be flying, why, where is the harm? Would you have it otherwise?"

So gladsome was the light in the young man's eyes, so transfigured were his handsome features with joyful surprise, that Padre Ignacio's admiration and love for him knew no bounds, especially when he remembered that this news might be the death knell of their fellowship. He longed to draw his dear son towards him, to fold him in his arms and cry to him, "Thou art indeed my son, and I thy father."

He came towards him and placed a hand on either shoulder, then gazed into his eyes with a mighty yearning.

"If," said the priest, "henceforward we be destined to part, remember that though I am only your father's brother, I love you as though I were your father himself. You are much more to me than a beloved pupil; you

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seem as though you were my beloved son. What little sadness you perceive in me is selfishness. It is regret at the parting I know to be inevitable, at the journeying forth that I myself shall be the first to counsel, for I know it to be for your welfare."

"Do not feel any such regrets," replied El Chopo, "for they are misplaced. If I go, it is but to return. I love Santa Fe, and I love the people; above all I reverence *you*, my uncle, to whom I owe what little good is in me. Nay! smile not, it is the truth. And since you are so bent upon my banishment, where had you thought of sending me?"

"It is for yourself to choose," said Padre Ignacio, "if, however, you ask me, I had already thought out a plan."

"And what is it?"

"First, that you go to the University of Salamanca for a while, then to a certain university in France for a year or more. In both of these places I can find you friends, and powerful ones."

The young man rose and walked thoughtfully towards the balcony, whose glass windows he opened wide apart. A gentle breeze was stirring in the orchard. From the miles and miles of orange groves down in the vale the rising air had gathered a basic scent, and now it came filtering in among the citron and lemon blossoms and Lady-of-the-Night, from which it received a yet more subtle perfume as it passed. When the wind came direct from the West, the scent of orange blossom prevailed and permeated everything; when it veered round somewhat to *terral* it blew straight through the gardens, and coming from the land, was hotter, and bearing more essence of Lady-of-the-Night, was more voluptuous, and there

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was that stillness about the evening that, taken in conjunction with a sudden rearing of brilliant castles in the air, made El Chopo yield himself to his intoxication in silence.

He stood leaning upon the balcony for several minutes. The Jesuit understood his sensations, and for a while refrained from interrupting him. Presently, however, he went and stood beside him.

"What does all this mean, to your mind?" he asked, indicating with a wave of his hand the whole scene in front of them.

"I do not follow you."

"I will explain myself. One looks upon the sea when it is lashed by a furious gale, and it means 'Anger.' One looks into its clear depths in the dark shadow of a cliff and fails to penetrate, and it means 'Mystery.' One hears the autumn wind blowing the dead russet-coloured leaves about the ground and moaning through the naked branches, and it means 'Death.' But now, I ask you, what does this scene before us mean? The various components, stars, flowers and perfumes, to a young man your age, surely they mean one thing and one alone?"

El Chopo did not answer for a little, but continued leaning his chin upon his hands. At last, turning towards the priest, he laughed and made reply—

"I were a hypocrite did I pretend to ignore that these letters spell 'Love.' But why do you insist that *I* am best fitted to read them? On the one hand I should say that a woman of my age would be more apt to read them; on the other it would seem that even you, a priest and celibate, are able to spell out the lesson that Nature has written so fairly upon her blackboard."

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"Nevertheless, you, dear nephew, are of the type above all others to whom this lesson will appeal. And all the more so because, till the present, you have known less than any other man what love for woman is like. It has not yet come upon you. That is a mere question of chance."

The Jesuit turned inwards and commenced to pace the room slowly, his hands behind his back, his eyes bent upon the black and white tiles of the floor. After a pause he resumed his speaking—

"I once knew just such another young man as you. He was consumed by the same desire for knowledge. He believed that he had one great quest in life, to find the Truth. Like you, he had never looked into a woman's eyes, and like you he started upon his quest filled with enthusiasm. Like you, without knowing it, he was susceptible, and——"

"I susceptible?"

"Alas, how well I know every sign and signal, every trait and feature in this compound of weak flesh and blood before me. Your mother was a North-country woman, a Vizcaína. Her father had been a giant. The hugeness of bone and muscle skipped a generation. In you, it blossoms forth again. Lo! these biceps and this mighty chest, these limbs like oak trees, and these hands that might wrench a bull's horns asunder. Add one or two traits of comeliness that mark your face, and, so much for your mother! The Vizcaíno prevails in you, I hope. But, alas—your father! Oh, my poor young man—your *father*!"

Here the priest sighed heavily and walked away deep in thought. When he returned, with hands behind his back, he looked at El Chopo and went on again—

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"Your father was a monster of susceptibility, a prodigy of weakness. Impulsive of resolve, yet frail of execution, imagining great heroics, yet unable to fulfil the most common obligations. His ideal of nobility was so soaring that no mortal has ever attained it, yet his selfish maltreatment and neglect of——"

"Hist!" cried El Chopo half seriously, "a piece of that same man stands here before you and bids you talk more kindly of my father."

"Why—there spoke your mother," said the priest.

"Was she, then, kinder than my father?"

"Aye," replied the priest sadly. "Enough, though, of your father! Unless I am mistaken, you have much of the self-same stuff in you. Your mother also had less of common sense than of romance, so people said. With such parents my only wonder is that the inevitable has not already come to pass. And when at last it happens—Adiós!"

Padre Ignacio had returned to where the young man stood in the balcony, and rested his hands upon his shoulder.

"'Good-bye?' and why?"

"Ah, how well I know it all!" returned the priest, with a calm smile. "I have been at your elbow this many a month, for two or three years, in fact, and what have I done? Has knowledge made you happier? It is seldom that it brings such consequences. And for myself, I have been growing too fond of you, I have been weaving a net for my own entrapping, and shortly must see it cast. But enough of an old man's morbid lamentations! I see the world through misty spectacles. Enough of selfishness! Let me endeavour to look out upon the world awhile through the spectacles that *you* are wearing. And what shall I

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find? Stars that mean hope, flowers that mean beauty, perfumes that mean delight. Does it need a great prophet to foretell where these things must lead a gallant cavalier like you, just come into a fortune?"

"I am no cavalier," laughed El Chopo.

"Why, there you are mistaken," said the Jesuit, standing before him in the balcony with folded arms, and a fond and gloating look in his eyes. "You needed but one thing, fine feathers. And they have come to you. Great shoulders like those, arms that could hug an ox, eyes that never flinch, what were these things meant for?"

"To make a scholar, with God's help," replied El Chopo, still very merrily, "and to take me a few poor miles along the road that my master has travelled before me."

"In quest of what?"

"In quest of—¡vaya!—in quest of knowledge. To dig at the root of all things without fear."

"Your words fill me with apprehension. I am like to prove but poor encouragement to-night, I fear. It is my mood. Before you set forth upon this quest, a word of warning! I have noted one tendency in you which may be your undoing, and end with all your happiness. When bent upon analysis there is nothing you hold too sacred for experiment. There are some things you must not submit to such a process."

"And why not?"

"Because they are not suited for it. Because we have not the reagents in our laboratory wherewith to treat them."

"Do not fear. If there be aught that seems to me inexplicable, it is sufficient that you believe it. To differ from you would seem to me presumption."

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"That is a frail basis whereon to build relief."

"It is all-sufficient."

The eyes of the pupil met those of the master, and as they smiled at one another there seemed to be a bond of the keenest sympathy between them, and on one side at all events that sympathy was instinctive.

The discussion was long drawn out, plans were put forward and projects considered at some length. The wagon and horses had climbed much higher above the orchard before El Chopo turned to go, and those on the other side of the College had already seen the lights put out in the fishermen's huts on the island of Lagarto.

* * * * *

The next morning El Chopo sauntered along the beach maturing plans. The sunshine on the sea was like an emblem of his future; the Porrinos, chanting and dragging in the nets, an emblem of the past.

Amongst the Porrinos was one Capitán, no longer a budding minstrel, but a barefooted toiler, bending his back and pulling like a mule, but not so strong and not so valuable. Yet all of them looked cheerful.

How then should *he* feel, favoured by a learned priest, able to read and write, able to take his ease, to follow his bent, to spend golden onzas where before he had grudged an ochavo?

What a fine world it seemed that summer's morning; the white faluchas out on the blue horizon, the ripple that rolled the coloured pebbles at his feet, the vega to his right, carpeted with vivid green maize.

A boat was just throwing out the net. The fishermen uncovered and invoked Our Lady, La Virgen del Carmen. El Chopo took off his hat and bowed his head; then, turning westwards, he slowly walked along the beach in the direction of the village cemetery.

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This walk was a favourite one with those in Cinco Caminos who had leisure, and even with people from Santa Fe. It commanded a view of the bay of Santa Fe with the island of Lagarto in the middle, and the hills and mountains inland behind the town.

The young man was not the only person who had chosen this promenade, for half-way to the cemetery he met the village priest.

The priest, when he saw El Chopo advancing towards him along the beach, was at first disposed to turn away from the water and gain the highway, but, after some little hesitation, kept on his course.

"So," said the priest, "you have inherited a fortune?"

"They tell me so."

"Ah, well! You know the saying, 'If there be food in the dovecot, doves will not be wanting.'"

"To whom does that apply?"

"To nobody in particular, and to everybody in general. Has it not occurred to you that there were those who knew well all along that this wind would blow your way?"

"I cannot think who should know it, good father."

"Those who know everything, those who discard their friends when once they have done using them as ladders, those who will wring you drier than a grape skin. The Jesuits!"

"You are greatly in error."

"Mistrust is the mother of security. Try the receipt—it will stand you in good stead."

"Your receipt would make me very unhappy, good Padre."

"Well, you must do as God guides you. Mind one thing, you will find borrowers at every corner."

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"Up till now, no one has asked me for a real."

"Nay," chuckled the priest, taking out his snuff-box, "people do not ask outright."

He sniffed at the pinch of snuff with his head first on one side, then on the other, looking thoughtfully at El Chopo the while.

"And what are your plans—if a *village* priest may ask?"

"I shall leave Santa Fe in the course of another week, journeying to Salamanca. Thence I shall go to a college in France. Altogether I intend to spend two or three years abroad, devoting my time to study."

"What branch of study?"

"The history of mankind; the history of the world, geology, botany. These are the subjects that attract me most."

"It will take you more than three years to master *them*," said the priest, with a superior smile, as one who knew.

"Oh, I have no hopes of 'mastering them!'" laughed El Chopo.

The priest, catching his thumbs in the armholes of his vest, looked pensively at the young man for a minute, then said suddenly—

"What if there were something in existence that altered your plans entirely?"

"What do you refer to?" asked El Chopo in surprise.

"Ah! I do not *know*, mind," replied the other, with a knowing smile, half closing his eyes and shaking a forefinger in front of him. "I only said that there *might* be."

"You rouse my curiosity."

"Do I so?"

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The priest again lapsed into silent thoughtfulness, his eyes resting on the Jesuit College far away on the hillside. A slight shadow seemed to pass across his face ; then, pursing his lips, he suddenly bade El Chopo good morning.

"The old man grows no younger as time goes on," thought El Chopo, "and maybe he is getting near his dotage. 'Something to alter my plans?' What can he mean? Nay, this is mere jealousy of my good friends up yonder in the convent, and I am not so foolish as to take notice of it."

With a shrug of the shoulders he continued along the beach towards the cemetery, but sorely puzzled.

The priest, meanwhile, wrapt in thought, went home in search of breakfast. After his frugal meal was over, he fell asleep, muttering every now and then as if dreaming, and, waking up after several hours, went straight to a corner cupboard, and took down a little mahogany casket, with brass bands, locked, tied over, and sealed. He sat for some minutes with his left hand on his knee, balancing the casket in the other hand, and regarding it closely with a frown.

"I wonder," he soliloquized, "whether this young friend of ours has truly reached an age of 'discretion'? He can read and write, yet——. Pish! Let him have a year or two abroad! Consorting with Jesuits, he has not gained my confidence. Nay, nay, scanty 'discretion' after all, to be the dupe of yonder treacherous crew."

"I wonder what is inside?—Humph!—Neither light nor heavy, neither loud nor silent when I shake it!"

Then, after a few minutes' pause—

"There be *some* priests, now—" he murmured, and slowly shook his head.

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Finally he rose and replaced the casket in the cupboard with a deep sigh, shrugged his shoulders and stood looking up at it with his hands behind his back.

"Virtue," said he bitterly, "was ever its own reward, and maybe after guarding the casket all these years I shall never be rewarded even with the knowledge of its contents. 'A great secret, that may be of value, when he reaches *an age of discretion!*' Well, well! He isn't discreet as yet."



CHAPTER XII

" Ah! Sure within him and without,
Could his dark wisdom find it out,
There must be answer to his doubt.

* * * *

For every worm beneath the moon
Draws different threads, and late and soon
Spins, toiling out his own cocoon."

TENNYSON.

EL CHOPO left one morning early by the diligence, with a mind as open to convictions as any mind in Santa Fe, and though he carried with him certain beliefs and sentiments which were rooted pretty firmly, his determination to dig at the root of all things was about to be realized. He possessed a most wholesome curiosity, a little rough logic, a hasty temper when roused from his dreamy moods, and a growing appreciation for the beautiful in thought, or sound, or being, but above all things he was very much in earnest.

In Salamanca he felt somewhat lonely, not falling in at first with any genial companions, and being, truth to tell, a little shunned by the other collegians, most of whom were well connected, boasting freely of their parents and relations. El Chopo, who passed as "Señor Nieto," was reticent on such subjects. It was only natural, moreover, even with a youth who had received Padre Ignacio's instruction, that one or two trivial failings should have survived the hard life in Cinco Caminos. These, in time, wore off.

As irony would have it, the fellow student who was

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least critical of the big Vizcaíno was one José Ramos from Santa Fe, a person who knew that he had been a fisherman's donkey boy, yet never opened his mouth to mention it.

José Ramos was something of a socialist and a rake. He was that particular happy-go-lucky laugh-while-you-can sort of mixture which grows in Andalucía.

Many a Sunday night had he spent in the little wayside ventorrillos of Santa Fe, in one of the summer harbours built of cane and overgrown with convolvulus, girls dancing on the table in the lamplight and his companions steadily getting drunk. Sometimes these orgies ended in broken glasses and bottles, sometimes in women's tears, and more than once had knives been drawn, though not by José Ramos.


For José was strong of nerves and kept his head, knew how to handle a knife as well as any chulo, but had an aversion to spilling blood, and certainly would not fight about a woman.

In course of time the two young men became very friendly, their characters contrasting so strongly that each found the other a relief to his own personality. José Ramos came to live with El Chopo. They shared a four-roomed flat.

Ramos had a splendid voice, but played the guitar indifferently. His répertoire contained the six least decent songs of Santa Fe, which is saying much.

El Chopo, who could play the guitar fairly well, took him in hand, showed him one or two serenades, told him he had a voice like a syren, and astonished both Ramos and himself with the results.

José Ramos took a chulo's pleasure in practising with the knife. A favourite trick of his was to pierce an egg with the point, throwing it across the room. At



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first El Chopo only used to watch him. One night he entered into competition with José, to while away an hour, for he could not read whilst the other was throwing knives.

Each was armed with a knife, but, by means of a large wooden button and leather thongs, each blade was so shielded as to expose but half an inch of the glittering point, a custom well known to students of Salamanca in those days. Each man had a capa wound round and round his left arm for parrying blows. José would fetch blood from the big Vizcaíno, first on the left, then on the right, and though but a pin-prick, the defeat was maddening.

On one occasion El Chopo rushed at the wiry little Andaluz, lifted him in his left arm, and, sticking his half-inch of steel into his thigh with sheer brute force, cried angrily—

“Take that, thou grasshopper! Six of thy trademarks have I got, and by God, thou shalt have one too!”

José, wriggling and spluttering, was so tickled by this new method of attack that he could not find breath to answer, but when El Chopo set him on his feet, stood holding his sides with laughter.

In time El Chopo became more proficient, and all José's lunges were buried in the capa on his arm, but there was one stroke which took a deal of mastering. It was an upward lunge at the heart, preceded by a feint, and though El Chopo learnt it himself, he was never quite successful in defending it. In fact, it was so deadly that one could only avoid it by skipping aside, and therefore to any one attacking and leaning forward, it was fatal.

El Chopo spent most of his leisure in the great

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library. He felt a thrill of pleasure when he realized that such a large field was thrown open for him to browse in, succeeded, often enough, by a sigh of disappointment that he could only hope to absorb such a small fraction of this pile of information.

Then came a crisis in his line of thought and conduct.

Leaning over his balcony one evening he noticed a plainly dressed man step out of a doorway across the road with a parcel under his arm. As it so happened he was again standing in his balcony when the same man returned. His parcel had disappeared. The incident was trivial, and no doubt would have slipped his memory had it not been that in the course of the month that followed, the same man walked down the street with a similar parcel nearly every night.

One evening the police lay in wait for him, arrested him, and carried him off to gaol.

"José, come quickly! Who is that man?" called El Chopo. José threw down a pack of cards and sprang to the balcony.

"¡Caracoles!" he cried. "That is a foreigner, a missionary, a man who gives away Bibles. His name is Don Jaime (James). He sings most beautifully, through his nose."

El Chopo followed the matter up in the newspaper. Thanks to no little influence, the prisoner was released upon the understanding that he would immediately leave the town. He did nothing of the kind, hoping, no doubt, that he would again be arrested. His enemies had not sufficient pertinacity.

The matter roused El Chopo's curiosity. There was something weird about this "infidel." It was the first time that he had come in contact with such a being.

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One night, José being in some dancing café, he followed the missionary, saw that he entered a large private house with many other people, and, a few nights later, gained admission.

* * * * *

The Roman Catholic faith, according to the speaker, was pure idolatry. The saints, who were merely mortals, had been magnified into gods, thus imitating the polytheism of the pagans. The acceptance of the Virgin Mary as a divinity corresponded with the worship of Diana of Ephesus. The purgatory of the Catholics was merely the Hades of the ancients. The Holy Relics so carefully treasured by the Romish Church were holy rubbish. The Pope was an impostor and a hypocrite who deserved a few years in gaol. The miracles of the saints were lies. The confession and absolution of sins were ludicrous. The celibacy of the clergy was unnatural and incited these arch-offenders to hideous crimes at the confessional. Penance was laughable. The theory of Transubstantiation was blasphemous. The use of incense, bell and candles was heresy. The trinkets on the Altar should be cast upon the dust heap.

* * * * *

This was the first occasion upon which he had ever heard an open attack on principles which had gradually become part of his very being, traditions which were cherished and most sacred. It came upon him like a thunder-clap, and held him spellbound, then sent him home tingling with indignation. He confessed to the Jesuit fathers this visit to the Protestant meeting house, did penance for it, and was forbidden to go again.

The rough and ready sermon, full of strong invective, well delivered from a powerful pair of lungs, and in a

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tone that had conviction close behind it, haunted him day and night. At length he miserably admitted that there was some grain of truth in what the missionary had said. He read the heathen mythology, he found the prototypes of nearly all his saints, his rites and holy days, and—horror!—he trembled to think that he saw still more prototypes than those to which the speaker had referred.

Day after day the man stepped out of the same doorway just across the way at nightfall. He grew into the way of watching for him. There was something awful and unholy about this anarchist of rites and ceremonies. What was worse, he had a Satanic magnetism for El Chopo, who felt himself yielding inch by inch.

Acting on a sudden impulse, José again absent, he went to the meeting house once more. Another fiery discourse! This time the Romish Church was only lashed occasionally. The subject was sin in general; the remedy, hell fire.

He returned home in a fit of deepest gloom and never went to the meeting house again. Yet a change had already begun in his ideas. His pitiless reason made war on the traditions of his youth, and, wounding his passionate love of the beautiful in the stern fight, hurled on one side the curtain of Holy Faith.

Old convictions were coming loose like rocks undermined by the sea. Two or three of them tumbled down forthwith. He had brought home with him a Bible from the meeting house. It was printed in Castilian.

What struck him most was the humility of Christ, His poverty, His riding into Jerusalem on an ass.

He passed in review the gorgeous pomp of Rome,

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the gold and silver and jewels, the crowns and silks and satins, in a word the wealth of the Romish Church, her arrogance and luxury.

Could this meek and lowly One who preached humility have intended that these vanities should be flaunted by His Church? Then his mind wandered to the missionary, his hell fire, the sternly plain meeting house, the absence of all supernatural atmosphere.

He buried himself in his books, but the question of the creeds had a fascination for him that would not be refused.

He found that the Buddhists believed in no God at all; he was horrified to learn that the most generally accepted creed was nothing less than atheism.

He found that there were millions of people who worshipped the sun, others that worshipped Satan, others that worshipped nothing.

He found that God had not only spoken to Moses, He had also spoken to Mahomet, of which there was equally strong testimony.

Within a few months of reaching Salamanca El Chopo had become unhappy. He tried to divert his thoughts to other matters than religion, but found it impossible to do so. After all, he told himself, it was the one great question of a man's life, and, as such, must be threshed out.

He tried to reconcile the various religions of mankind. It seemed to him impossible. He studied the outlines of the most prominent creeds with greater attention. He argued the matter for another month. He fell into a slough of despond.

José did his best to rescue his friend from this despondency. One lovely summer's morning El Chopo sat poring over his books. He had forgotten to open the

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windows of the balcony which looked upon the fruit-sellers' stalls towards the right. The sun was beating down fiercely upon the blue and white striped awning over the windows, though a lazy breeze swayed it sleepily to and fro.

In came lazybones José, rubbing his eyes, blinking at the fierce sunshine and crying "Pouf!" lunged open the folding windows of the balcony and called for his cake and coffee.

"You are late," said the early bird presently, looking up from his reading.

"He who rises early," replied José, "must have an uneasy conscience, whereas he who sits up late enough will gain experience."

"Of a kind."

"Humph! Of a kind that would do *you* no harm. And what have you been doing?"

"Reading and reading."

"Ya! 'Since you know everything,' said the wolf, 'and I know nothing, pray tell me what I dreamed this morning!' What book is that you are consoling yourself with?"

"The Bible in Spanish."

"Ouf! No wonder! What a curious animal you are!"

"But it should do me no harm."

"The devil stands hard by the crucifix! Why don't you go to the bull-fights?"

"Because I go to *man* for advice, to the bull for horns."

"And what is your trouble?"

"I am fast becoming an infidel like you."

"My God!" cried José, looking very startled and opening his eyes. "Don't call me an infidel!"

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"Why not? You are one! You treat life as a huge joke, you can't take religion seriously, you never go to confession. You are like all the Andaluces of your sex. You scarcely know a word of the Scriptures save what you have gleaned from the processions, and the rest—to swear by."

"What!" said José, with some signs of genuine indignation. "You tell me, *me*, that I do not know the Scriptures?"

"Aye! What do you know of them? What was the beginning of the world?"

"¡Ea!" cried José, "I must have wine for that, comrade, not coffee!"

Whereupon he went to the cupboard, took out a bottle, filled a glass to the brim with golden sherry, and, raising it on high, placed one foot upon his chair.

"In six days," said he, "God made heaven and earth and Andalucía, and on the seventh day He sent His angels to wait for Him in heaven; He left the earth for beasts and men to roam on, and sat Him down to rest in Andalucía."

José drank down his wine and picked up the guitar. A different atmosphere seemed to have come into being since his arrival. To be sure he had opened the windows, and let in a deal of morning air and woman's laughter. From outside came the chatter of trim servant maids who, with basket on arm, were tripping with neat little feet between the stalls of the fruit-sellers, besieged by students and soldiers whom they pretended not to see.

"Come, Sir Studious," said José, laughing and plucking at his guitar; "I will show you that I know a hymn or two, as well. Listen—

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"Here burns my poor wax candle
Thy holy shrine without :
And faith ! it were poor service
To blow my candle out." ¹

"José," said El Chopo, half smiling, half serious, "wise fellows like myself that read such a mighty lot are generally the greatest fools."

"This morning I am a philosopher, eh ? One never knows ! Yesterday I went to bed an ass. Whilst yet I sit in the chair of Philosophy, let me tell you of a grave fault, common to all Northern blood in general, characteristic of yourself in particular. Sir Thoughtful, you are too serious ! Life is a rippling joke, and if not—the sooner we say good-bye to it the better. I have noticed you out of the corner of my eye, giving too much importance to everything. You are too observant of the calamities, too neglectful of the blessings of this world. Believe me, there is nothing bad in Spain, with the exception of things that talk, and even some of them are bearable—in petticoats. It seems to pain you, immensely, that God should give nuts to those that have no teeth. He did it for the fun of seeing good souls like you attempt to crack them."

"Go on ! No price is too great for good advice."

"And there is no better looking-glass than a friend. You know the old saying, 'Whither goest thou, Grief ? I go where I am used to going.' You are one of those who, through being too earnest, will always give Grief a welcome. ¡Caracoles ! If you trouble so much over a question like religion, what will you do when your sweetheart plays you false ? It will be a devil of a blow for you because you were born to be

¹ From the Spanish.

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true, instead of like me. I believe in the lame beggar's theory. If he always stood at one door begging he wouldn't make much of a living at it, so he goes from door to door. And so do I—from window to window. One cannot be faithful when women are so bewitching, for Beauty and Chastity had ever a standing quarrel, and when they fall out the Devil gets a dinner."

Whereat, having finished his breakfast,¹ he flung aside his chair, picked up his guitar once more, and sang—

"Thy father's a pastry-cook,
Love, it would seem,
Else, why are thy lips made of
Strawberry cream?"¹

This he sang in a certain fantastical manner, turning his eyes up towards an imaginary balcony. At the end of the verse he smacked his lips as though in the act of kissing, and laughing at El Chopo.

"That," said he, "is my idea of wooing. This should be yours."

Whereupon he assumed the tragic frown of a despairing lover, and chanted in as deep a bass as he was able—

"There is no pain so sad as dying,
But if there be,
Look down where true love stands a-sighing,
And thou shalt see."¹

El Chopo laughed good humouredly, and clapped the little Andaluz between the shoulders with his heavy hand, which made him wince.

"We were talking of religion," said José, presently, after he had been looking out from the balcony at the

¹ From the Spanish.

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market place, "and that reminds me of something. You, who are so fond of Santa Fe, perhaps you might care to see a piece of it this very day?"

"Aye!" said El Chopo, "what sort of 'piece'?"

"In petticoats."

"I might have known it!"

"Hist! They are nun's petticoats."

"Oh!"

"Or soon will be. What o'clock is it?"

"Mid-day."

"Then put on your hat and your most sanctimonious air, for already we are late for the wedding."

José led the way to a church on the outskirts of Salamanca. Beside it stood a convent which had evidently been half demolished, but was now restored.

In the church was a great concourse of people in holiday dress, and, sure enough, El Chopo recognized a few faces from Santa Fe. One, Dolores Guñalón, a young girl of eighteen, in lovely bridal garments, a garland of orange blossom upon her head, was kneeling beside the altar.

"Dolores, of the family of Guñalón of Santa Fe," whispered José to El Chopo, as they knelt in a remote corner of the dark church listening to the organ.

"And those that I recognize, they will be her relations?"

"A few. Her father and brothers will not have anything to do with it. Yonder, kneeling behind that rush chair, is one of her school fellows. They used to be taken for sisters."

El Chopo turned his eyes from the bride to a young girl, who, overcome by emotion, was kneeling, with a maidservant upon her left, among the congregation.

The young men, withdrawn in the shadows of the

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church, and not far distant from these two women, were able to see them quite distinctly by the rosy light of a window which was above them in the ancient nave.

El Chopo thought that he had never seen so heavenly a vision as this young girl. Her face was most spiritually beautiful, and once when she turned her dark eyes towards the shadows where he stood, and gazed far past him with teardrops glistening upon her sweeping lashes, he felt such a delicious thrill pass through his heart that he grew pale. He could not avert his gaze, and presently José whispered to him behind his hat—

“I have been watching you these ten minutes, comrade. I never thought you had so keen an eye for a well-turned figure and a pretty face.”

“Hist!” said El Chopo resentfully, pushing him with his elbow.

“As you will. But that was not what we came to see.”

A slight movement and whispering among the people caused them to be silent. The bishop had finished his address to the young girl and two nuns brought in a great salver, on which rested the spotless white uniform of a novice. On this he bestowed his blessing. The nuns, with the mother superior and the bride, then left the church and passed through a small dark chapel, in the side of which was a cancela or passage, communicating with the convent. All the people went shuffling and whispering into this side chapel, in which were a few oak stools and rush-covered chairs, and along each side of the dark passage were stone seats. Half way along this passage was a beautifully wrought iron gate which closed behind the procession, and two silent nuns, each with a great lighted candle

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in one hand, stood guarding it and looking towards the chapel. With the candle flames close before them they could see nobody, but the light reflected from their white coiffures and white faces gave them the appearance of wax saints.

Those seated in the passage considered themselves outside the threshold of the church and commenced to talk, at first in whispers. Then, when a third nun came smiling past the gates with a silver tray, holding small glasses of wine and yet smaller cakes, the people regarded this as official sanction of their merriment. The nun only gave to those in the cancela, but glasses were passed on into the farthest shadows of the chapel, which she refused to notice and went back for a further supply.

El Chopo with José beside him in the chapel stood looking towards the gate, for upon the left-hand side sat the beautiful young girl whom he had seen in the church, and beside her was her maid. Both maid and mistress seemed to be talking with some excitement, and the lady, having dried her tears, had even accepted a tiny glass of wine which she merely tasted, then handed it to her maid.

"Ah!" said El Chopo impulsively.

"What?" asked José.

"Nothing. Only that I would give my right hand for the remainder of that wine."

"Pooh! Nothing so easy!"

The Andaluz stepped away towards the iron gates.

"José," whispered El Chopo, bending forward and crimsoning with shame, "come back, you mad buffoon; by God, I will shake the breath out of you when we get home. My God! my God!"

But whilst the big Vizcaíno stood opening and

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clenching his hands in tenfold agony the gallant and intrepid Andaluz stepped forward to the lady near the iron gates, and bowing with one hand upon his heart, said to her something that caused her most suddenly to blush, and she and her maid looked outward towards the chapel. Whilst they did this José picked up the wine-glass from the stone seat and motioned with his head towards El Chopo.

"Fair lady," said El Chopo, coming forward, bowing very low and speaking so that none outside the group might hear him: "I beg you to forgive my friend's impertinence, which I indeed forgive with all my heart, for at least it has brought me the enchantment of your passing notice."

"There now!" laughed the Andaluz. "Did I not tell you, Señora? This big chap, once he begins, has a fire and eloquence that might melt a heart of stone. ¡Caracoles! I would not have these good sisters overhear his impudence for worlds!"

José said the last words a trifle louder and looked towards the two nuns, who tried hard to keep serious, but happening to glance at one another quite broke down. Laughter, indeed, was becoming general, and even a little lovemaking in the dark recesses of the chapel. The more decorous cried "¡Chis, Chis!" but no one heeded them.

El Chopo drank the rest of the wine from the little glass, and the young lady, recovering her self-possession, said to him with some amusement—

"I would not have you suppose that I could tolerate such behaviour from a stranger, but it so happens that my father and the father of Don José were school-fellows. Thus it is that I know him, and know him for what he is worth."

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José bowed in the most extravagant manner possible.

"You come from Santa Fe, Señora?" said El Chopo.

"Yes. It is the first time that I have been out of it. And unless travelling improves in the next few years, it will be the last. Twelve weary days have we been upon the road, choked with dust, jolted from one rut to another, and passing the nights in constant fear of brigands who infest the mountains again near Santa Fe."

"Ah! you mean Carrasco. Do you know, Señora, that I think I have seen you in Santa Fe."

"It is quite possible."

El Chopo sat beside her and lowered his voice a little.

"My name," said he, "is Nieto. The Father Rector of the Jesuits is my uncle."

"Oh!" exclaimed the lady, turning towards him with growing interest. "Then we are both of us Jesuits? My father is Don Ramón González, and he brought me here at my earnest imploring to bid my dear friend Dolores a last farewell."

"Then you are Doña Encarnación González?"

"Carna González, at your service, Señor."

José at this moment turned back towards the chapel, carrying a fresh glass of wine and making for another familiar face that he had just perceived.

The two young people, left to themselves and unnoticed by the chattering crowd around them, exchanged a long glance, and Doña Carna, suddenly lowering her lovely eyes from the passionate gaze of her admirer, went on talking.

Carna: "I had often thought that I should like to go abroad for a holiday, but it seems so many, many

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miles from here to Santa Fe. We used to talk of Paris, and this, they say, is only half way. We could never get so far as Paris."

El Chopo : "Some day, perhaps, you may."

Carna : "Oh no! I am quite sure I never shall!"

El Chopo : "Why not?"

Carna : "I hope that my father will not forget to come for me! Susana, you must look out for my father at the church doors. I fear that he does not know we are in the chapel, and to lose oneself in this strange town—Dios mío!"

El Chopo : "It is all the fashion now for people to go to Paris for a month or two when they get married. And no doubt you are engaged?"

Carna : "I? What a thing to talk about! Señor! The personal interest you take in my affairs is quite embarrassing."

El Chopo : "But are we not both Jesuits? And were we not both born in Santa Fe?"

Carna : ¡Ya! I had forgotten. That accounts for it. What puzzles me is that I cannot remember the exact occasion when I first saw you. But I have certainly seen you before."

El Chopo : "And I have dreamed of——"

Carna : "It is most disgraceful!"

El Chopo : "What is disgraceful, Señora?"

Carna : "The way that the young fellows are whispering and chattering with the girls out there in the chapel. We are little better ourselves, though, of course, we are talking sensibly, and moreover, we are seated beyond the threshold. Still, I think that we should be silent."

El Chopo : "No, no! That were surely needless when all our elders are talking as loudly as they can."

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Tell me, why should you be so certain that you will never go to Paris? Have you some reason?"

Carna : "¡ Señor! That which I have not confessed even to the priest, must I needs confess it unto you?"

El Chopo : "Would that I had as little to confess as you have!"

Carna : "You seem to have formed too good an opinion of me and all in ten minutes."

El Chopo : "Señora, without any discourtesy, such a thing is possible. For however good an opinion you might deserve, my own estimation of you would be better. It is hard for me to tell you——"

Carna : "Well, then, I pray you, Señor, tell me absolutely nothing!"

El Chopo : "I implore you to hear but another word. Since my poor eyes first looked upon your face——"

Carna : "¡ Señor mío! You take my breath away! Do people in Salamanca meet in the morning, sigh to each other at noon, and kiss at sunset?"

El Chopo : "And what term, lady, would you demand for the like advancement?"

Carna : "A term sufficient to prove a man's sincerity."

El Chopo : "Ah, then, Señora, you do not refuse all hope?"

Carna : "Hopes are like laurels, which yield no fruit whatever, but are always green."

At this moment the novice, her bridal robes all doffed, and clothed as a nun, came forward towards the iron grating with a sister on either hand. The bishop advanced through the chapel to the other side of the grating to give her a new name. Every voice was hushed, and all eyes were turned upon this impressive

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spectacle, to which the flaring candles gave a strange ghostliness, in keeping with its purport, their light falling upon the snow-white robes of the novice, as white as the robes of Doña Inés de Ulloa.

Outside the church El Chopo and José waited to see Doña Carna go homewards, and before long she passed them, leaning upon the arm of her father and followed by her maid. Once and once only did she glance at them, her eyes meeting those of El Chopo, then quickly turning away from him.

"My friend," said José, as El Chopo gazed after the graceful figure of the Andaluza, too enraptured to care for ridicule, "this is the beginning of the end."

"Aye!" was the reply. "Yonder goes fate in a black mantilla."

That same night El Chopo dreamed a dream.

Once more he was a fisher lad in Santa Fe, and a lovely little dark-haired girl with a golden crown bent over him and kissed him. Even as he returned the kiss the child's face grew into a woman's face and smiled at him lovingly. And she said—

"I am Andalucía!"

And Andalucía was Carna González.

CHAPTER XIII


"For though that ever vertuous was she,
She was encresed in swiche excellence
Of thewes good, yset in high bountee,
And so discrete, and faire of eloquence,
So benigne, and so digne of reverence,
And coude so the peples herte embrace,
That eche hire loveth that loketh on hire face."

The Clerkes Tale.

DON RAMÓN GONZÁLEZ, farmer, traveller, and agent of the Jesuits had been in poor health for some time past, and he died within a few months of his return from Salamanca, leaving his daughter Encarnación the heiress to a small fortune, and some property, amongst which was the house with its orchard at the back.

This house was situated upon the east side of Santa Fe. A short side road leading down from the king's highway towards the sea had a couple of villas on either side of it, behind them their orchards of orange trees and fig-trees, to the south the beach; along the beach great pyramids of glistening salt, beyond these pyramids a flat and sandy desert, relieved by a few dunes.

Turning down from the high road towards the sea, the house of Doña Encarnación was the last one on the left, whilst that of her aunt, Doña Josefa González, was upon the right. In front of each villa was a short stretch of garden, but a footpath which passed to the seaward of Doña Encarnación's garden allowed one to walk close alongside the whitewashed walls of the house itself.



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On this side was her balcony, filled with pots of flowers which she carefully tended, and shaded by an awning. Thrusting its head round the corner from the orchard was a large bush of *pacífico*, whose great crimson blossoms looked up towards the balcony and stood out in fierce relief against the blazing white-washed walls. Inside the yard was an ancient vine, and there was a legend that this vine had once served for the lover's ladder in an elopement, for it climbed halfway up the house.

The wall on the sea side was high, in order to ward off the salt breeze. There is also a wind called *Levante* which blows from the east, and is very pleasant to animals, but deadly to trees and plants in the early spring. It withers the newly budding jasmine as if the blast of a furnace had passed that way, and often the eucalyptus trees may be seen to fade and turn their leaves the wrong way up whilst this breeze is blowing.

The house of Doña Carna (an abbreviation of *Encarnación*) was the oldest in the street, and old folk in Santa Fe could remember when it was reckoned quite a solitary farm residence. For even Santa Fe expands a few inches in every generation, and what little it had grown was in the direction of the rising sun, in order to get up earlier. Upon entering, one saw a large patio, with a floor of red tiles, and this patio covered a goodly portion of the ground floor. It was half a garden, and all through the summer was open to the sky.

From the patio a flight of red brick steps, edged with treads of oak and guarded by a handrail of plain wrought iron, led up to a gallery which ran along three sides of the patio and gave access to several doors. Even this gallery had been pressed into the service of

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Flora, for Doña Carna had stationed pots of a certain creeper along the rails, and this creeper came swinging down below the gallery, and little clusters that looked like spiders would tickle your face as you walked beneath.

From the gallery the first door to the left opened into the bedroom of Doña Felipa, guide, mentor, and friend of the young mistress; the second door corresponded to the chamber of Carna herself.

To the right hand as one entered this bed-chamber was a snow-white bed, round the walls highly coloured pictures of the saints, a sampler of the marriage of Santa Ana worked in coloured wools on canvas by Carna's mother, opposite the foot of the bed a crucifix, a little more to the left a balcony so thickly covered with flowers and creepers that one could hardly perceive the orchard that lay beneath.

The white and blue striped awning kept the sun out, and a shrill canary, in the middle of the opening, would sometimes hold aloft his beak, lift every feather on his vibrating yellow throat, and give vent to such clamour that the old black cat, blinking on the fork of a fig-tree down below, would think to himself what a vastly different song it would be if only he could reach him.

At the far end of the gallery was a door which led into a large whitewashed bedroom, where slept the serving maids, and this was immediately above the reception-room, which opened directly on to the central patio, as did the kitchen.

The first thing that caught one's ear in this kitchen was the mighty tick-tock of an asthmatical old clock with weights which almost reached the ground, but it only told the hours and not the minutes.

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This being so, how was it that the cook could always boil eggs to such a nicety? I will tell you. Two "credos"¹ went to a lightly boiled egg, three if you wanted the white set, and four "credos" boiled it hard.

Of course if you called away the cook in the middle of a "credo" the devil took the egg and boiled it to a flint, and served you right!

The kitchen had a country fireplace for winter time, on which they burned pressed grapeskin refuse, olive wood, and even logs of oak; but this was seldom needed, for they only have a frost in Santa Fe once in ten years, and when it comes it kills the sugar-cane.

For ordinary cooking purposes the little Moorish *candelas*, three in a row, no bigger than pudding-basins, and sunk into a red-tiled bench, were all-sufficient.

Doña Carna, with a mere handful of charcoal in one of these tiny grates, would cook you a whole dinner, but then her hand was deft, and could drive the air into the little archways underneath the embers with far less effort than you or I would use.

When she stood in front of one of these *candelas* with her left hand on her hip and wielding the rush fan with her other hand until the sparks flew up the great dark chimney, she looked prettier perhaps than at any other time throughout the day.

In the warm weather her throat would be bare and her loose red blouse half open, and when she knew that only her servants were near she would break into a wild love-song that went thrilling out into the orchard past the iron cross-barred windows, and up through the patio towards the pigeons that cooed on the red-tiled roof.

¹ The Apostles' Creed is in daily use in Andalucia for boiling eggs.

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If the cat came too near the dinner she would stamp her foot at him and bat him over the head with a movement of her fan, and if you or I had stolen in upon her at such a moment, as likely as not we had met with a similar fate.

Carna, at her father's death, was situated in somewhat the same position as a ward in chancery; that is to say, there existed a mysterious control over her affairs which proceeded from the Jesuits. This control was all the more mysterious for not being formally proclaimed. Her father's will had left the money locked up in such a manner that it was only accessible through two persons who resided in Madrid and Cádiz, and these people, moreover, were endowed with certain powers and privileges which even allowed them, with the signature of Doña Carna, to make use of the money themselves.

Strange to say, in no part of the will was the Company of Jesus even mentioned, neither had Doña Carna received any written injunctions which bade her follow their advice.

But her father, in his last moments, had called her to his side and had said certain words to his sobbing daughter which practically bequeathed the filial obedience she had always rendered him to the Company of Jesus, and made them his representatives.

In addition to these claims upon the obedience of Doña Carna the Jesuits were able to reckon upon others equally cogent.

In the first place, upon the decease of her father, who was a widower, they overruled the pretensions of her aunt to become her protectress, and forthwith appointed one Doña Felipa as her chaperon.

Doña Josefa, the aunt of Carna, whose house stood

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nearly opposite, forthwith retired from all contact with the circle of which her niece was destined to become the central figure.

It is interesting to note that Doña Josefa was a partisan of the Bishop of Santa Fe, whilst her niece was a protégée of the Father Rector of the Jesuits. These two interests were irreconcilable. The Bishop visited the Father Rector, complimented him upon his orchard and his wine, saw the cascade turned on, smiled very soapily at everything, and rode back to Santa Fe to tell lies about the college.

The Father Rector visited the Bishop in his palace, and deferred to him with a scrupulous courtesy, which the Bishop knew full well was a cloak for the Jesuit's contempt. The servant of the Black Pope could not be hand-in-glove with the White Pope's retinue.

After the mourning of Doña Carna was ended, she gradually established a *tertulia*, or weekly "evening at home," at which her chaperon, Doña Felipa, nominally presided, but which, in reality, looked towards the young heiress as their leading spirit.

Doña Felipa was a corpulent dowager of forty-five, of a countenance perfectly smooth and placid, and with eyes that were almost somnolent. Those who opined that Doña Felipa was half-asleep, however, were egregiously mistaken. She allowed her pupil the free exercise of her will in almost everything, and yet knew how to enforce her decision upon the very few occasions when she interfered.

In this matter of indulgence the attitude of Padre Martinez, who was Doña Carna's confessor, was the same as that of her chaperon. He abstained from all unnecessary correction, reserving his veto for those occasions which absolutely demanded it.

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It will be seen, therefore, that so far from chafing under perennial restraint, Doña Carna was far freer than those less fortunate of her sex who confessed in the cathedral and churches.

It must not be thought, however, that Doña Carna took advantage of the freedom conceded to her by her confessor and her chaperon.

Her beauty was exceptional. Indeed it was this, in the first place, that had so entranced El Chopo, and brought her into his life for better or for worse. Her eyes were of a deep violet, so deep as almost to seem black, and there was a shade of sympathy in them when they looked at one from under their long black lashes that drew one's heart towards her even when she was cold. No man, and certainly no Spaniard, could look into those eyes without forgetting the very word he came to say.

The nose was straight and clearly sculptured, the face oval, the lips generally half-parted in a smile when she was listening, though always naturally, for she dreaded affectation, being too beautiful to have need of it. Small and perfect teeth showed from the Cupid's bow when these lips were parted, and each cheek had ever so slight a dimple.

Her head was gracefully poised, and she had a mass of dark silken hair that, viewed in the shade or by artificial light, seemed almost black, like her eyebrows and lashes ; but when she crossed the road at midday, without even holding her outspread fan to shield her from King Sol—so thick was this clustering hair—one saw that her tresses were bronze auburn.

There are old men in Santa Fe, even to this day, who remember how supremely beautiful was the heiress of González. They will tell you that her figure and

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her face were matchless, even in Santa Fe. Ask them how she walked, and they will answer, "That how she walked? Why, señor, nothing! She walked like the living glory that God sent to scatter grace throughout the earth."

Don Joaquín Pérez, the rising poet of Santa Fe, had one morning inserted a six-verse poem in the local news sheet, dedicated to Doña E— G—, of which the first verse might be translated as follows:—

"Tho' all the sky were paper,
Tho' ink were all the waves,
Tho' I wrote a thousand years,
I could not write thy praise."

An Englishman who read this effusion said "that the statement, if true, betokened either very great beauty in Doña Carna or very great lack of conciseness in her minstrel." But what else would you expect from an Englishman?

When Carna walked abroad of an evening, accompanied by Doña Felipa, it was no uncommon thing for some gallant or other to cast either his hat or cloak in front of her (that she might leave the print of her little foot upon it) and cry, "Blessed be the mother that bore thee," for those were the days when open admiration, so long as it were courteous, was never counted an insult, and even had Doña Carna been escorted by a husband or a lover, her companion must needs have laughed and taken it in good part.

On all such occasions Doña Carna would bite her lip and endeavour not to smile, and would most carefully avoid the impressing of her footprint on the garment by going round about it and feigning not to see it. There were times, however, when, prompted by the spirit of mischief within her, she would so guide

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her portly chaperon by the arm as to force her to place her foot in the middle of the cap, and if it were a cloak, she would contrive that Doña Felipa should plant both feet upon it, left and right. When this happened, the gallant admirer would be left lowering and muttering to himself at "yon seven arrobas of pork," and would gather up his plush-lined capa with a very bad grace and angrily shake the dust out.

Doña Carna's religion was the offspring of a keen emotion and sense of reverence. Logic had no part whatever in her belief, and argument was powerless to upset it.

Doña Carna was born with the instinct of worship, and this instinct was nourished and rendered all-powerful by the impressive *mise-en-scène* of the Romish Church.

In Latin countries, even more perhaps than here, there is a certain glamour and impressionalism about the Roman Catholic Church that can evoke a fair semblance of piety from people who, by nature, have no religious instinct whatever. It is the appeal of the picturesque to the artistic mind. Carna's enthusiasm was twofold, deriving its strength perhaps equally from both sources.

It is difficult to draw the line between her instinct of worship on the one hand and her sense of the beautiful upon the other. Possibly in some cases they are incapable of resolution, and it is doubtful whether her attitude to the Deity could have been explained on either basis alone, whilst taken conjointly and mingled with an ever-present emotion, these factors gave rise to a highly religious temperament.

It will therefore be seen that restraint on the part of her father confessor was hardly necessary.

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As an instance of this I may mention that whereas Padre Martinez would not have exacted a single pater-noster for the reading of a French novel, Doña Carna eschewed such entertainment.

The doctor's girls and the girls of the widow Lopez, on the other hand, were strictly forbidden such literature by their confessors, and it formed their chief temptation and figured more often than anything in their confessions.

There was yet one other factor in Doña Carna's piety which is difficult of description. This factor was a consequence of the distinct personality which is given to the Saviour in the Romish Church, of the constant dwelling upon His nobleness, wisdom and love, and of the portrayal of His body in the flesh.

In Santa Fe many beautiful images of the Saviour upon the cross are carved out of alabaster, ivory, and other white materials, some of them enamelled and coloured. There are wax effigies which represent Him as a being of most perfect manly beauty. A wonderful image of the Saviour surmounted the altar in the Jesuits' chapel. It was carved from some hard wood, and was enamelled to resemble flesh.

A life-sized image of our Lord was also placed above the altar in the Cathedral of Santa Fe. For the virgin who takes the veil, and is taught to look upon the Saviour as her betrothed, these beautiful dolls must sometimes lend a very real significance to the ceremony. Even in the case of Doña Carna the thorn-crowned image in the Jesuits' chapel, surrounded by its candles, cast an ethereal glamour over her devotions which lent her a sweet content. This feeling was most holy, chaste and virginal, and yet it had something of love. Perhaps a good woman's love is so spiritual as to need

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no refining when offered to the Deity. Perhaps she is unable to offer aught else but that feminine love which is the same, though differently manifested, towards the husband and the child.

To say that Doña Carna was religious, however, does not distinguish her from the great majority of women of her place and time.

She was also domesticated, and had such a light hand in making puff pastry that her masterpieces even found their way to her aunt's tertulia, and were set before the Bishop. Old Don Ramón González used to swear that no olives in Andalucía were equal to those that his daughter prepared.

These accomplishments she had inherited from her mother, who also had taught her a special way of pickling tunny fish, which Doña Carna had so improved upon as to make the relish celebrated in all Santa Fe. Visitors who came before midday would find Doña Carna with her sleeves tucked up, and her hands all over flour and spices, her hair somewhat awry, and her skirts pinned up behind so as to leave her movements free.

Those were the days of open-worked stockings, and lucky was the man who caught Doña Carna unawares. Not only did he look upon as graceful a pair of ankles as one might see in half a dozen feast days from below the cathedral steps when the girls came out from mass, but he found Doña Carna blushing and all abashed, looking fresh as a carnation in the dew, and he had set before him a mouthful of pickled tunny and a copita of old Amontillado that had lain in the cellar since Don Ramón was born. Then she would run away to straighten her hair, and when she came back, you would say to her, "Señora, since last you were

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with me four very excellent things have disappeared." To which Doña Carna, who is not supposed to know what you are about, makes answer, "¿ Verdad ? What might they be ? "

"The first," you then say, "is a glass of wine of most phenomenal fragrance, and the second a mouthful of some viand which baffles description ; but as for the third and fourth, unless it please you to dance a panadero, I shall have no further opportunity of deciding which of the two excels the other, or whether both are best."

This you say looking very hard at her toes, which she forthwith draws back under her petticoats and calls you "¡ Chinchoso !" with a very terrible frown, to which a pair of dimples and a pair of laughing eyes suffice to give the lie.

Doña Carna was only twenty years of age. Those who envied her said that she was proud, and even vain.

But Doña Carna was not proud. She visited the Lopez girls, invited them to fêtes champêtres, and generally consorted with them. And it was common knowledge in Santa Fe that the Lopez girls were poorer than church mice. What they lacked, however, in money, they made up in good looks and good humour, which is more than many girls can say.

Doña Carna's pride consisted rather of a rebellion against overweening confidence, and therefore it seems likely that this accusation proceeded, for the most part, from the men. It must be remembered, however, that Doña Carna was rich, and riches bring envy, hatred and malice. Of the many families in those parts whose principal daily meal consisted, as Spaniards say, "in the chewing of their finger-nails," there were few that would not have felt pleased to see some

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disaster overtake the fair young heiress of González. This fact became very patent at a later date.

* * * * *

In was an evening in the middle of June, and Doña Carna was seated near the foot of the staircase in the patio, knitting herself a pair of stockings by moonlight. The kitten was playing with the contents of her work-basket, and making sad havoc among the balls of wool and silk and the cards of thread.

At various points about the patio were scattered three serving-maids and Doña Felipa. The maids were nearer to Doña Carna, and formed a semicircle round her, whilst Doña Felipa was comfortably ensconced between two green tubs of orange trees, her feet upon a hassock, and her eyes half closed in thought. *The Lives of the Saints* lay under the orange tree by her left elbow, and her glasses were in the other tub on her right. Daylight had failed her, and the clear moon overhead, though all-sufficient for fingers that need no guidance, was scarcely enough to read by.

The servants were named respectively Conchita, Susana and María.

Conchita was busy knitting, like her mistress, and sat upon a hassock.

Susana was beating pepper seeds in a heavy brass mortar with a brass pestle, and sometimes she sneezed, for the odour was very pungent, and for this reason the others kept well apart from her.

María, like Susana, sat upon the ground. María, however, nursed her knees and did nothing, for her earthen puchero was simmering on one of the little grates, and now and then she would jump up and run into the kitchen to see how it was getting on. When she ran away, the kitten bounded after her, and after-

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wards came back to play with the balls of wool again, its supper still deferred.

Doña Carna was telling her girls a tale, and this is how it went.

Doña Carna (slowly and thoughtfully): "Well, Señoras, this was a king who lived in a far country.

"He was a very mighty king and very rich, and he lived in a palace with windows made of jewels, slept on a bed that was covered with silk and stuffed with rose leaves, and ate his puchero off golden plates, and drank out of a goblet set with rubies and diamonds. And yet he was very unhappy."

Conchita: "¡Jesús!"

Doña Carna: "Yes. He was very unhappy, for he was without a wife."

Susana: "The remedy seems easy."

María: "¡Digo—o! And so easy!"

Doña Carna: "Not so easy as you might think for——"

María: "Was he young and handsome?"

Doña Carna: "Oh! handsome is not the word. And only twenty-five."

Susana (to María, trying to be scornful, but inclined to sneeze): "And even if he weren't, you ninny!"

Doña Carna: "Well, let's see, who was telling the tale?"

Chorus: "You, Señora!"

Doña Carna: "The remedy was not so easy, for he had been a very dutiful son, and had always obeyed his parents, and the old king, his father, before he died, had called him to his bedside and had said to him, 'My son, when thou gettest thyself a wife, take heed that she be able to do three things.' And the prince asked the king, his father, 'What may these

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three things be ? ' And the king replied, ' First, she must be able to pass in front of a mirror without looking at her reflection ; second, she must be able to sit at the window and sew all day without ever raising her eyes ; third, she must be able to listen to the gossips telling lies about her without betraying that she has even heard them. ' ”

Conchita : “ ¡ Qué barbaridad ! No wonder he couldn't find a wife. ”

Susana : “ I could stand the first, but what about the second ? ”

María : “ And the third ? Could flesh and blood abide it ? ”

Doña Carna : “ We shall see ! So the old king said, ‘ Swear to obey me in this my dying wish, ’ and the prince swore to obey him. ”

“ So the old king died, and the young prince became king. ”

“ And when the days of mourning were over, he began to think that he should like a wife, for he felt very lonely. ”

“ Now the old king that was dead had told him that these three proofs must be made secretly. ”

“ So the king bade his Prime Minister seek him out the most lovely girls in all the kingdom, and on a certain day to bring them to his palace. ”

“ And when they were all standing in a row—— ”

Susana : “ How many of them ? ”

Doña Carna : “ Oh, hundreds ! ”

Susana : “ ¡ Dios mío ! Enough to put a sergeant of dragoons to the blush ! ”

Doña Carna : “ — the king went slowly all along the line, and he marked a black cross on the forehead of those he didn't like, and they were sent away, ”

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and when he came to the end only three were left."

María : "¡ El tío-o-o ! He took some pleasing ! "

Doña Carna : " The first had black hair and brown eyes, the second had golden hair and blue eyes, and the third had red hair and green eyes.

" So the king took the first one apart, and her cheeks grew so red, you could have toasted beans in front of them, and he said to her, ' Walk through that room in front of you. In the middle there is a mirror. Do not look at it, or I may not marry you. And afterwards there are two more tests.'

" So the maiden entered at the door, but hiding just round the corner was Satan, and he whispered as she passed, ' Daughter, thy hair is falling down.' And when she came in front of the mirror she needs must give a quick glance at herself, and the king came after her sadly and bade her begone, for he might not marry her.

" And he took the second maiden on one side, and her cheeks grew so red you could have toasted beans in front of them, and the king thought to himself that this time he would begin with a different test, and he said to her, ' All this afternoon you must sit at the middle window of the palace sewing. And if you look up from your sewing even once I may not marry you. And afterwards there are two more tests.' So the maiden sat at the palace window and sewed for hours and hours and never once looked up. But just when the sun was setting, came Satan disguised as a gallant cavalier and playing a guitar. And he sang such a pleasing ditty, praising her loveliness, that the maiden blushed as crimson as a cherry. Then suddenly he

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broke off in the middle of his song and cried, 'But yonder goes a maiden yet more lovely than the one that is sitting in the window.' And the maiden looked up quickly from her sewing to see this sight, and the king, who had been watching her, came up to her very sorrowfully, and touching her on the shoulder bade her begone, for he might not marry her.

"Then the king called the third maiden to him, and her cheeks grew so red you could have toasted beans in front of them, and he said, 'Sit you beside the door, which is ajar, and outside are certain of your neighbours that know your business, and I will set them to talk about you among themselves. You must not speak, or look angry, or betray annoyance, for if you do I may not marry you. And afterwards there are two more tests.' So the maiden sat in a chair beside the door, and the courtiers had brought certain of the neighbours, and paid them to say the worst they knew about her. And they not only said many things they knew, but also many other things that had been told them, and things that were untrue; but the maiden looked meekly down upon the floor and bore it all in silence. But Satan, having disguised himself as an old woman, was there amongst the neighbours, and presently he said, 'Enough of spiteful talk, and let the maiden be. I for my part know no harm of her, and indeed I believe her very honest. She has only one failing, and that she cannot help.' And the others gathered round him and wanted to know what this defect might be, and the maiden listened so eagerly that she could hear her own heart beating. Then said Satan, 'Why, have you not noticed the poor thing, how all day long she has kept her feet hidden underneath her petticoats, and even now she

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has taken care to cover them with her skirts. That is because they are so large.'

"And the maiden burst into tears, and springing up from where she sat, cried out, 'It is a lie; I have my mother's boots on.' And she kicked them both off and said, 'Let the king see for himself what size my feet are.' And her feet were small and pretty. ❧❧

"But the king came towards her and bade her sadly to be gone, for he might not marry her.

"And after some time had passed the king bade them bring him more pretty girls to choose from. Yet somehow or other none of them stood the tests. There were those that got through one only to fail upon the second, and there were even one or two that passed the first test and the second, yet they failed upon the third.

"And many years passed away.

"Now the king grew very sad, for he had no wife; and his courtiers also were sorrowful, for there was no heir to the throne; and at length a Cabinet Council was summoned and the matter was debated.

"Nobody could make a suggestion without some one else pointing out a flaw in it, till at length one old man, who hitherto had not spoken, rose to his feet and at once proposed the remedy. So simple was the idea and yet so ingenious, that every one heard him with profound astonishment. His advice was that——"

At this precise moment all eyes were turned towards the door, for a captain of Civil Guards, young, handsome, booted and spurred, his left hand on his sword-hilt and his right hand on the latch, stood smiling and bowing before the astonished assembly.

CHAPTER XIV

"Morena tiene de ser
La tierra para claveles ;
Y la mujer para el hombre,
Morenita, y con desdenes."

Old Spanish Rhyme.

"AND what, pretty cousin, did the old man advise?" asked the Guardsman, striding across the patio towards Carna and taking her hand in his.

Doña Carna at first had risen from her chair in great surprise, tumbling the balls of wool and the kitten on to the tiles together. When, however, the Guardsman addressed her as "cousin" she at once realized that it was indeed the same lad who had left Santa Fe half a dozen years ago, a dapper lieutenant of Infantry.

"When did you come?" asked Doña Carna, consenting with a bad grace to be kissed. "And why did not my aunt let me know you were expected this evening?"

"I came this very day, by the road from the mountains. The War Office sent us here through Carrasco's favourite country, to make him fear and tremble. As for being expected—why, I much prefer to see surprise in such eyes as thine. ¡Jesús! What eyes! What a pearl of a little cousin!"

"You have already dined, Luis?"

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"Yes, cousin, dined, and left my mother in doubt as to whether she was dreaming. And do you see what is the very first thing that I seek?"

Carna looked towards Doña Felipa and said—

"Luis, you do not know Doña Felipa Serna. This is my cousin, just come from Madrid and lately returned from Filipinas."

The young officer bowed to the elder lady, who returned the bow with dignity and asked how went the war in Filipinas.

"Slowly, Señora, slowly! A bloodthirsty cunning lot of devils in a great forest full of weeds. It is like chasing jaguars through a swamp. But we are paying them in their own coin. The greatest curse of the country is the monks and Jesuits!"

"You forget, cousin," said Carna, with a nervous smile, and looking towards Doña Felipa, "that we are Jesuits here."

"¡Caracoles! So you are! I seem to have a marvellous facility for putting my foot in it."

Doña Felipa looked all honey.

"Poor Filipinos!" said she, "and we are hunting them down like wild beasts. But Filipinos were not the only things you hunted."

"Not the only things, Señora?"

The old woman smiled at him very meaningly. He looked away from her and betrayed a slight awkwardness. He had a poor conscience. More than one accusing woman's face looked at him from far-away Manila, and the memory of many a reckless escapade came back to him. When people know a few of our sins, we fear that they know them all.

"Not the only things, Don Luis. But I must not take liberties, for you are a hero; is it not so?"

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The Guardsman followed her eyes, which were bent upon a cross pinned to his breast.

"¡Ea! I have made one or two Filipinos scamper, Señora!"

"And killed a Spaniard, single-handed."

The Guardsman winced, and darted a fierce defiant glance at her.

"Nay, I slew him in fair fight. A well-fought duel, with seconds and umpires, all complete."

"Oh, I am not blaming you," said the old woman, having made her points; "but you see what a lot we hear in this quiet Santa Fe of what you gay young gentlemen are doing on the other side of the globe."

"Marvellous, Señora, marvellous!" said the Guardsman, and took out his tobacco case to make himself a cigarette.

During this passage-of-arms Carna had looked a little nervously from one party to the other. The tobacco smoke seemed to bring peace.

"And Carrasco?" asked Carna.

"Ha!" said the captain, "'tis Carrasco who brings us here. Therefore, Carrasco's health!"

Carna, as if reminded of something, beckoned María towards her, and talking with her apart, bade her prepare three cups of chocolate and a small glass of brandy.

Then, turning again to her cousin, she bade him take off his cloak and make himself at home.

When Don Luis threw off his cloak it became apparent that under one arm he was carrying a small parcel, which presently he tossed upon a chair without remark and went on talking. Susana brought him an easy chair out of the reception-room, and he sat himself down with careless grace, throwing one leg

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across the other, and displaying a jewelled ring on the hand which he leant his face against.

With the other hand he fondled his moustache, and there was a something so insolent in his manner that he seemed to have had a victorious career among women who offered but poor resistance.

Presently Susana brought one of the little tables out of the reception room and set it alongside Don Luis, and María brought a tray with three steaming cups of chocolate and a little glass of brandy. Doña Carna brought sponge cakes from a cupboard in the parlour, and all three persons drew near to the table.

"I suppose," said Don Luis, addressing the elder lady, "that my pretty cousin has told you of the time when we were sweethearts?"

"She has often spoken of you," replied Doña Felipa with a smile.

"What a little bag of mischief she was!"

Don Luis stroked his moustache and looked across at his cousin with a roguish laugh.

"How she cried the day I left Santa Fe!" continued the captain.

"Of course I did," answered Carna in as matter-of-fact a voice as possible. "I was very sorry you should go to the wars."

"And not for aught else?"

"We were both of us children; I, at all events, was barely fourteen years of age."

"¡Caracoles! Only fourteen! But you were a woman!"

"I was in short petticoats."

"No matter; you had a way of making love that—
¡caramba! it warms a man's heart to think about."

Here the Guardsman burst into a hearty fit of

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laughter, and sitting upright in his chair tapped the crimson cheek of his cousin with the back of his hand.

"But you were telling us about Carrasco, cousin," said Carna.

"Ah! To be sure! So at last they have made a barracks of Civil Guards in Santa Fe, not before it was wanted, and here am I, sent down with a company eighty strong, half of them old Guards, half of them picked veterans from Filipinas, like myself, drafted into the Guards, and with a month's instruction in their new duties, new uniforms, and clean faces. God! It's a pretty uniform, say what they will!"

He smacked his thigh and laughed, surveying his glittering facings of scarlet and gold, his white pipe-clayed breeches and black cloth gaiters with evident satisfaction.

"Well," he resumed, twirling his neat moustache, "our friend Carrasco has been distinguishing himself of late. ¡Caracoles! I believe I half admire the beggar for his pluck! Who else would ever dare to ambush a squad of Infantry with fixed bayonets."

"Ambush a squad of Infantry!" cried Carna.

"Aye! That he did! ¡Niñas! Good-evening! What is this one's name?"

The question was addressed to Conchita, for the three maids had stolen forward and were listening to the news.

"Conchita, your servant," said that damsel, making her bow.

"And the one behind you?"

"María."

"And the one in the dark?"

"Susana."

"Well, Conchita," said the captain, lolling back

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until the chair threatened to fall over, "I think you are the best-looking of the three, unless it be the one in the dark, or the other one behind you."

At this there was a general titter. Carna smiled, and the girls, thus encouraged, drew nearer and waited to hear the news.

The captain complacently blew a whiff of smoke towards the moon, let his chair fall upright with a jerk, and went on with his story.

"Well, my Lord Carrasco gets to hear that Government bullion has landed at Cádiz, and that the orders are 'quick, march,' through Jeréz and up country, by day or by night, with eight bayonets in front and eight behind. He carts away the landlord and servants of the *Posada de la Cuesta* up into the hills, takes their place with twenty of his men, and when the convoy comes up late at night, there you are! The landlord with his arms akimbo, the hangers-on rubbing their eyes and grumbling, a couple of lads fallen asleep on the bench in front, and half a dozen guests singing *Seguidillas* to a guitar. 'Gentlemen, you are kindly welcome,' says the host, and so they were."

The captain paused to look round him and slap his leg and laugh.

"So they were, to be sure! In walks the lieutenant first, gets to the end of the long dark passage, and—
¡zas!"

The women gave a stifled scream.

"What! *killed* him?" asked Carna.

"No! Carrasco isn't fond of blood. Only when there's no other way, mind you. Gagged and bound him, with a blanket over his head! Six bandits standing flat against the passage on each side!"

"¡Jesús!"

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" 'Come along, sir,' says the landlord, walking on through the inn, and the sergeant follows next, thinking he was speaking to the lieutenant, when—¡ zas ! Number two ! "

" ¡ Qué barbaridad ! "

" And after that, number three, four, five, six, until they came to the last man. And all done so neatly that the last was just as much surprised as the first.

" And they do say that Carrasco and his men sat them round the room in sacks, all bound with ropes, and gave them soup and wine, which they all took, and enjoyed the fun, except the lieutenant and the sergeant, who were wondering whether they'd better turn brigands, or go back to Cádiz and be shot.

" And next morning, before dawn, off went Carrasco and his devils on mules, carrying the arms and boots of the soldiers and two hundredweight of gold and silver, with a ' Good-morning to you, Señores, and I trust we haven't inconvenienced you ! ' "

Loud exclamations from the audience.

" Oh, that's nothing ! He's a clever fox, is Carrasco. Mind you, the Civil Guard wouldn't take a pleasure in hunting him if he *weren't*, eh ? Why, they say he has his chapel up in the mountains, in a cave all glittering with stalactites, and a priest, and a lady-love more beautiful than a rose on a May-day morning. ¡ Caracoles ! *That* he has ! But not half so pretty as you, cousin."

Carna gave a slight start of vexation.

" Ha ! ha ! ha ! " laughed the captain, who had always found coarse compliments acceptable in Manila. " Do you remember, cousin, the day when you came to me with a peach between your teeth and your hands behind your back, and bade me see who could bite the

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bigger half, and at last the peach fell out of our mouths for laughing ? ”

“ No ! ” said Doña Carna, hiding as much of her face as possible behind her cup of chocolate.

“ Nor yet the day when you fell into the sea off a slippery rock, how I carried you home to my mother with a sprained ankle ? And I fetched your dry clothes, and tied the bandages round your ankle ? Do you remember ? ”

“ I cannot remember,” said Doña Carna.

“ ¡ Caracoles ! ” laughed the Guardsman, “ you have a devilish poor memory ! But I will tell you of one thing more that you cannot have forgotten.”

Don Luis leant over the arm of his chair nearest to Doña Carna. He seemed to take some pleasure, or to have some purpose, in publishing these facts. He looked hard into Doña Carna’s eyes, and she, though blushing, met his gaze unflinchingly, and with a displeasure behind her nervous smile which no one might mistake.

“ Tell me you have forgotten what was our love signal, how you had a shawl of Manila, yellow on one side with red and green flowers, and red on the other side with green flowers and yellow. Tell me you have forgotten that the nights I was to come courting you at the window it was your custom to hang this shawl of Manila over your balcony. When the shawl was hung with the yellow ground outside, I was to come to your window before *las ánimas*, for you were alone, and when it was hung with the red ground outside, I was to come after midnight, when your parents were asleep, and to wait in silence till you came to your balcony. And there we would stand making love for hours and hours, whispering along the spout. Have you forgotten ? ”

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"This," said Doña Carna, rising hotly from her chair, "I remember least of all."

When Carna made this reply the captain laughed more loudly than ever and turned, with a hand on each arm of his chair, to watch her as she walked across the patio, and did not fail to notice how she stamped her little foot.

"We appear," said Doña Felipa, "to have lighted upon a topic which is not quite acceptable. Tell me, I pray you, did you come across the family of Álvarez in Madrid—I mean the Álvarez of Santa Fe?"

"No, Señora, I never had that pleasure," replied the captain shortly, and rising from his chair went after Carna to make his peace. The girls walked off to the kitchen.

It would appear that the Guardsman had made amends for his presumption, for presently Carna returned to the table and sat down. Whether he apologized, or whether Carna bethought her that it was uncousinly to show bad temper to the traveller just returned, she gave no sign of bearing him any malice.

"Well, you were telling me about the diligence, cousin," said Carna, when they sat down again.

"Aye! So this lady, who was a marquesa, sat down by the roadside to cry. Up comes Carrasco, sees she is mortal pretty and rather young. 'Señora,' says he, 'have any of my fellows insulted you?' 'No, Señor,' says the marquesa, sobbing very hard and looking up at him, 'but you've taken my court dress, and I shall destroy myself.' 'Pish! That is easily remedied,' says Carrasco, and orders them to restore it, to set her on a mule with her belongings, and to escort her nearly into Córdoba, bidding her *adios*, and sweep-

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ing off his hat with 'an expression of the keenest regret that the present unhappy condition of society should compel him to earn his living in a manner that quarrelled with his better instincts.' Ha! ha! ha! Faith, that's so good a joke, cousin, I must have some more brandy to it!"

The Guardsman then took out his tobacco-case and made himself another cigarette, whilst Carna poured out the brandy.

"Well! well!" said he in a somewhat lower tone, and gazing down at his busy fingers, "so my poor uncle's gone! Well, one cannot live for ever! And so now you are rich, and I mustn't look at you!"

He glanced at her half thoughtfully, but with a bold lustre in his eye. Carna made a slight grimace, as who should say, "Why do you insist upon annoying me?"

After puffing for a few minutes in silence Don Luis asked them to bring him a lamp, and picking up the parcel that he had brought with him, commenced to untie the string.

Susana came with an oil lamp and held it up, supporting her elbow with one hand and looking towards this mystery with evident curiosity.

Presently the string came undone, and there fell out of the parcel—what?

Why, the most glorious silk shawl of Manila that the sun ever shone upon, worth nine or ten thousand reals, and shining like gold in the lamplight, so that Susana and the two servants in the kitchen doorway called out "Oh—h—h!" and even Doña Felipa uttered a word of admiration. The side of the shawl they looked upon had a groundwork of richest yellow, with flowers worked by hand in red and white and green.

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"Now," said Don Luis, laughing at their surprise, "hide the lamp."

Susana took the lamp away and looked back longingly at the shawl from over her shoulder.

"Look!" said Don Luis.

And when they gazed upon the shawl in the moonlight the warm colour had all gone out of it, but there was a peculiar sheen, especially when viewed at an angle, which was neither silver, nor yellow, nor purple, yet all these effects were visible, according to the folds one looked upon.

"Now," said Don Luis, "bring back the lamp."

And when Susana came willingly back he almost blew the light out with a sudden flourish of the shawl, which he turned in mid-air as a bull-fighter turns his red cloak, and behold! there was displayed a ground-work so vividly crimson that the pacifico blossoms would have looked dull beside it, and every one cried "Oh—h—h!" again.

This side of the shawl was embroidered with flowers in yellow and white and green.

After they had feasted their eyes upon it sufficiently, said Don Luis—"So much for the exhibition. Now, then, we come to putting it on."

And he handed the shawl to Doña Carna, who knew very well for whom the present was intended, and, being a daughter of Eve, was greatly dazzled by the finery, yet feigned not to understand.

So first of all Susana tried it on, and cut a fine figure in it, with her arms akimbo and her foot put firmly forward; then María took it from her, and gave her back the lamp.

But María, in her eagerness, fumbled with it, and the shawl caught on a button, and even when she had

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shaken it into position it looked hardly right, so that Conchita fell to laughing.

Then Doña Carna, with her eyes aglow, lifted the shawl from María's shoulders, and, stepping aside, swung it round her figure, shook it this way and that, pinned it across her breast, and in a trice the willing silk had fallen into a shape of sweet repose, every fold a poem and every flower a song.

Doña Carna stood proudly before them all with her head thrown back and her lovely neck caressed by the blood-red fringe, her hands upon her hips, and her body slightly swaying from side to side.

Then everybody cried "¡ Olé ! ¡ olé ! " and clapped their hands, and the Guardsman, who at first had looked on silently and fascinated, strode across the patio, and coming close to Carna, with a face that was very serious and eyes that looked fierce, whispered to her—

" Blessed be the mother that bore thee ! Pearl of pearls, and rose of roses, the day thou tell'st me our love hath ended, all men shall go in black, and the sun shall lie abed, the streets shall be covered with a pall, and San Pedro shall lose the key to the gates of heaven ! "

When Doña Carna felt the hot breath of the Guardsman upon her cheek, she cast off the shawl and threw it on to a chair. Even before he spoke the reaction of her impulse had set in, and the colour mounting in her cheek told that she was ashamed of this sudden vanity, half play and half bravado though it was.

But a good housewife never lacks distractions wherewith to cloak her feelings, and Carna hurried away with Conchita to the kitchen, followed by the kitten,

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which, having patiently sat out the chocolate, saw visions of hot supper. For María was fanning the charcoal into a red glow, which was reflected from the earthen pipkin on to her face and arms, and a steam of something bubbling came floating into the patio, wrapped itself round the nostrils of Don Luis, and said very plainly, "Be off, for the girls want supper."

When Don Luis departed, Carna thanked him for his present, and let him kiss her cheek, but he caught her little hand and said to her—

"Do you understand, pretty cousin, why I have brought you a shawl of Manila? Why, forsooth, in order that you might hang it over your balcony as you used to years ago."

When she heard this she cried to him shortly "¡Adíos!" and pulling away her hand, ran back into the patio, where Conchita, Susana, and María were passing the shawl through their fingers with many exclamations, and Doña Felipa was looking on amused.

"To possess this shawl," said Susana, "what would not a body do?"

"¡Ay hija!" sighed María, sinking on the floor beside the chair, "to be mistress of that shawl is worth twenty thousand journeys to the top of Calvary with pebbles in thy shoes."

"I had sooner be married to it than to the handsomest man in all Santa Fe," said Conchita.

"¡Ea! And if one might marry the man and the shawl at the same time?"

And they all laughed and glanced at Doña Carna.

"This shawl," said Doña Carna with a smile, picking up the garment and taking it towards the

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lamp, "is the symbol of vanity. It is the gin whereby men catch such silly birds as you. 'To marry the man and the shawl at the same time' must mean that one marries the man to get the shawl. ¡Ay! There isn't one of you but what would wed a man to-morrow for such a dowry, you geese, and all the wise saws in Santa Fe could not prevent it, not even that one about weddings."

Chorus : "Which one, Señora ?"

Carna (laughing) : "'Mother, what kind of thing is this marrying ?'"

Chorus : "'Daughter, 'tis to spin, to bear children, and to cry your eyes out.'"

Carna : "¡Ea! I see you know it. But it seems to me that proverbs are like friends, and familiarity breeds contempt. Well, get to your supper and chase away such vanities with a wooden spoon. Much have you profited by the tale I told you only an hour ago. Not one of you could pass a mirror without turning her head."

Conchita : "And you, Señora, who have more reason ?"

Carna : "Be off with you! 'One eye on the frying-pan, the other on the cat.' ¡Anda !"

But Doña Carna was not very angry.

Whilst the girls were finishing their supper, the door of the patio was opened and there entered the same Tío Patas whom we have already met in the barber's shop, his clothes a trifle less pretentious, his stooping shoulders with the weight of several more years upon them, his eyes as restless and as ferret-like as ever.

On the death of Don Ramón González the Jesuits recommended him to Doña Carna to guard the house. He slept in an outhouse, of which there were several,

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attended to the poultry and the horses, pruned the trees in the orchard and looked after the garden.

In the days of Don Ramón labour was always available from the sugar factory of La Aurora, but Doña Carna had no active interest in the works since her father died.

Sometimes, when heavy goods had to be purchased, Tío Patas did the marketing, either accompanied by María, or alone. On this particular evening he had come back heavily laden. From his left arm hung a basket full of groceries and oddments, on his back was half a flitch of pork all ready for curing, and to balance this flitch, a bag of salt kept company with a bag of flour, the two of them colliding when he walked. He closed the door, and, coming towards Doña Carna, took off his high-crowned hat and wiped his forehead.

"This, indeed, is the way to learn to sweat," said he.

"Have you got the cinnamon?" asked Doña Carna, poking her forefinger into the flitch and closely peering at it.

"Yes, Señora!"

"And the boots—are they mended?" asked Doña Felipa.

"Also!"

"And how much did the cobbler charge?"

"That you shall see."

Wherewith he produced from one pocket a strip of brown paper in which were many holes pricked with a wooden tooth-pick. After holding this up to the light, in which position it looked like the constellation of Cancer set in a chocolate sky, he announced that the soleing and heeling had cost twenty-five pesetas.

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"¡Ay Dios mío!" cried Doña Felipa, holding up her hands.

"Calm yourself, Señora; I must be looking at the flour."

"The flour!" said Doña Carna. "Twenty-five pesetas of flour! Man, you are beside yourself! It would need an ass to carry so much flour."

"Then, Señora, clearly it cannot be the flour. ¡Ajá! I have it! These holes are only farthings. They are the salt."

"¡Hombre! A fine account we are going to cast if this is the beginning."

"Nay, then, I have it at last. I was near the truth in the beginning; one barrel hit the mark and the other went afiel. They are pesetas, Señora, and it is the pork."

"How many pounds are there?"

"Twenty butcher's pounds, and the scale fell over like a coach with the wheel come off."

Doña Carna made a calculation, frowned pensively and went over it once again.

"Why, this," said she, "works out at five reals a pound. ¡Hombre! I do not like your bargain!"

"This comes of letting him buy the things alone," said Doña Felipa.

"¡Dios mío! And a meal worm in the flour!" cried María, who had come from the kitchen to view the purchases, and was plunging her hand into the flour bag.

"Pish" exclaimed Tío Patas with an angry grimace, "They are finding worms enough without *you* digging for them."

"It is my own fault for not choosing the things myself," said Doña Carna, with a sigh of regret.

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When Tío Patas heard these words he cast down all his burdens, and turning his eyes towards heaven struck himself upon the bosom, once, twice, and thrice. This signified that all joy had gone out of life, and the sooner some one stuck a knife into him the better for his peace of mind.

The women-folk, without regarding him, went through the various purchases, tasted, pinched, and smelt the eatables, tried on the mended shoes, and nibbled at the cinnamon.

The loudest critic was the cook, who, all oblivious of the scathing look that Tío Patas aimed at her along his heavy nose, complained impartially of everything and hoped it might be a lesson to the señora "to use a more trusty messenger next time."

Meanwhile Doña Carna sat down with paper and pencil, whilst Susana fetched the scales, and having received the change began to make her reckoning.

Tío Patas sidled towards her, and bending down with the lamplight on his leering face, scratched his grizzled chin and said in an undertone—

"I have news for you. Whom think you that I saw this evening on my way from the mill? Why, Don Luis González, your handsome cousin. ¡Caramba! What a gallant gentleman, and how anxiously he asked after you. There was a look in his eyes when your name was on his lips that—a thing quite indescribable. He looks like a prince and he has the manners of an emperor. He shook me by the hand right brotherly."

At this point the girls, all laughing, began to carry the half flitch of bacon towards the kitchen. Doña Carna rose and followed them, without replying.

Doña Felipa, who had come near in the shadow

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of the orange bush, watched them disappear, then turned her eyes upon Tío Patas, and nobody in that moment would have thought that those eyes were sleepy.

"When he shook your hand, friend," said Doña Felipa angrily, "how much did he leave in it?"

"¡Señora!"

"Enough of hypocrisy! Who sent you here?"

The old woman's brow was gathering in a frown, and her aspect was almost menacing.

"Who sent me here? The Jesuit Fathers!"

"And when Padre Martinez sent you hither, did he tell you to arrange a match for Doña Carna?"

"Señora, you mistake my——"

"I mistake nothing. I take you to be a thieving ungrateful old hypocrite. 'You keep no goats, Don Ratero; where, then, do you get your kids?' Man, you had better go hang yourself before you meddle in matters beyond your ken. A word from me to Padre Martinez and—hold your tongue! Snivel and look sheepish, it is your forte!"

Doña Carna and the servants came back into the patio.

"And now," said Doña Felipa, "to prayers, for *las ánimas* have sounded an hour ago and more."

Forthwith the man and the five women all knelt down in the patio in the moonlight and bowed their heads in prayer.

There was a look of most ethereal purity in the face of Doña Carna when she breathed the Saviour's name, and when she turned her closed eyelids towards the moon and clasped her hands in front of her no physiognomist could have read in that countenance one letter that spoke not of fervour and of holy love.

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Each then wished the others good-night, the maids saying "May you sleep well!" to the two ladies, who replied "Thanks! And you also!"

Susana bolted the door of the patio on Tío Patas, who sought his little den above the stable and lighted a rush-lamp.

Going to the worm-eaten trap-door he closed it gently, bolted it, and chuckled—

"Lock your door, to keep your neighbour honest! Now let us see, let us see——"

Rummaging in his pockets he first pulled out the piece of brown paper stabbed with holes, rolled it contemptuously into a little ball and flicked it out of the window with his thumb, thrusting out his tongue the while and winking at the Great Bear, amid which constellation the missile seemed to have lost itself.

He then drew from his pockets some fifty reals in silver and copper, and placing them on a bench began separating them into two piles left and right.

He seemed in some doubt as to whether the last coin of all belonged to the left hand pile or to the right, and scratched his long nose with it. Eventually he placed it on the left.

"¡Ea!" he said at last, with a wave of his hand, addressing an imaginary audience, "Come and look, Señores! This pile of thirty on the right was given me by the captain: this pile of twenty-one on the left was given me by the butcher. The one is a produce of love, the other of pork."

This speech seemed to please him very much, for he several times clapped his hands upon his knees and chuckled to himself.

"On the whole," said he at length, "with all due deference to the Jesuits in general, and to Doña

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Lobberchops in particular, the love comes out better than the pork." And having hidden the money in a flower-pot underneath a board he crossed himself in the name of Nuestra Señora del Carmen, blew out the lamp, and threw himself upon a bundle of straw.

In less than ten minutes the silent moon was looking down upon a sleeping household. In the patio resounded the measured snore of Doña Felipa, heard through her door which was left ajar; from the stable loft came the deeper bass of Tío Patas, and a dreamy sleepy murmuring stole upward from the shore where the sea was playing idly with the pebbles and telling them such things as it never even whispers in man's presence in the daylight.

CHAPTER XV

"I am too forlorn,
Too shaken : my own weakness fools
My judgment, and my spirit whirls,
Moved from beneath with doubt and fear."

TENNYSON.

A GERMAN Protestant who lived in the South of Spain wrote home to his friends in 1860 that "In Málaga and Sevilla no one had been arrested hitherto, for it seemed as though the Government were afraid to admit how deeply rooted was the movement against the Church of Rome. The imprisonment of Matamoros and Alhama, however, had frightened many, and six persons had already fled to Gibraltar."

The year 1859 had been one of active persecution of the Protestants by the Papists. The colporteurs from Gibraltar were seized and punished, and one tract distributor was sent to prison for six months, whilst Martín Escalante was thrown into gaol for selling bibles at fairs.

Using Gibraltar as a base and refuge, the missionary campaign at one time threatened to involve two nations in a costly war. These conditions brought about a temporary coalition of the Black Pope with the White Pope. However half-hearted the Jesuits may be in

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their fidelity to the Pope of Rome, no stauncher warriors ever rally to his standard in the hour of a Protestant assault. *Their* battle front, more than any other, has rolled back the tide of Lutheranism all over Europe.

It is said that in their open-air meetings and their secret services alike, the Protestant agitators preferred to make the Jesuits the chief butt of their invective.

When it is remembered that many of these preachers were of English, Scotch or German extraction, it is hardly to be wondered at that their pet antipathy was the Jesuit, for he had held, in their minds, the position of bogey-in-chief ever since he was used to frighten them in their cradles.

It is not perhaps generally known how well organized this campaign against the Jesuits became. Seeing that they had barely returned from twenty years of exile, and were still a little uneasy in their shoes, it was a matter of vital importance to them that the movement should be checked.

This they prepared to do, silently, courteously and in confidence. In Santa Fe the anti-Jesuit agitation was more dangerous than anywhere, for it was below the surface. A little probing showed the company that the strings were pulled by some one having a knowledge of local conditions. They therefore suspected that a Spaniard was at the bottom of it.

In most other places it had merely been a matter of dealing with some clumsy foreign missionary speaking broken Spanish, an animal that fell into prison with a tremendous splash, it is true, but without the people's sympathy, only martyred and canonized abroad.

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Even Alhama and Matamoros had acted indiscreetly and shunned concealment.

Santa Fe was a harder nut to crack.

Many were the communications that passed between Padre Ignacio and the Provincial on the subject of this movement; many were the conferences between Padre Ignacio and his first-lieutenant as to the root and bottom of the danger.

Padre Ignacio held that it would be time enough to strike when the turtle stretched out its head.

"It has cost us hard toil this many a year," said he, "to regain the people's confidence. Even yet we are hated. Are we then able to invite opprobrium, to prove ourselves malicious and revengeful? Shall we place ourselves on a level with those who criticize us? Ought we not rather to show the world that the Jesuit's magnanimity can allow him to ignore these pin-pricks?"

To these opinions the Catalán priest would listen with bowed head and folded arms. Yet his own views were very different from the Rector's, not only in this respect but in many others.

Padre Martinez in most things was an ideal Jesuit, as Jesuits went in those days of steady resistance to a relentless foe, yet in one matter he was deficient. He had failed to acquire the Jesuit's power of submission to a superior will, in action, word and thought. He was fashioned by nature to command, not to obey. He could not suppress his inward criticism of the Rector's policy either in little things or great. There were but few matters that Padre Ignacio handled personally without his lieutenant's thinking "Ah! How much better had he acted in such-and-such a way instead!"

When Padre Ignacio's motives were too subtle for

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his blunter intelligence he sighed at what appeared to him mere weakness or indecision.

Yet he should have known more than all others that the Rector's courtly manner was never a sign of wavering, that the blue eyes could smile and yet be cold to him as steel, that friendly argument of a vexed question always had this same ending — that the Rector would be left gently victorious without having uttered a single word too loudly, whilst he himself stood self-defeated by the heat of his own blunt argument, for he always lost sight of anything but the one main issue until it was too late, and then he would realize that the Rector had been playing with him, and so courteously that he never even seemed to mock, yet Padre Martinez was sensitive enough to feel that the unseen sneer was still more biting than the sneer displayed. For it added these poignant lashes to its whipstock—mercy, forbearance, and “poor soul, your zeal is greater than your wit.”

At the conclusion of these “conferences” the Rector would turn with a sigh to his book, whilst the second in command, as though suddenly made aware by the sharp contrast of this silence that his own argument had been pushed a little too roughly, would cross his arms and bow his head submissively, in apparent deference to Jesuit discipline.

Yet he stood a man convinced against his will, and his heart always revolted.

It is necessary in most cases, when a man grows to hate his neighbour, that the neighbour shall have done him hurt, imaginary or otherwise. Not so with Padre Martinez. In the slow march of time the utter want of sympathy between these two men had opened a wide breach.

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This question of the anti-Jesuit movement in Santa Fe was, *par excellence*, the point upon which the two fathers most seriously disagreed. Padre Martinez, when asked to speak, would answer—

“We cannot be more hated than we are. We owe our position here to the powers that be, and to our own right hands. Our enemies are not made of the stuff that yields to love—they are built of such parts as cringe to a man when they fear him. They sneer at the olive branch, but they kiss the hand that holds the whip. To allow our foes to continue organizing and increasing is to the outsider a sign of weakness. This weed should be nipped in the bud.”

Some such discussion had been taking place on the evening that brings us back to the college, an evening not long after the arrival of Don Luis González. More than two years had elapsed since El Chopo went away, and shortly before the feast of St. John the Baptist a noble Andalucian horse, bred in the pastures of Cartuja, but jaded with much travelling, brought him to Santa Fe by the road from the Guadalote.

A slight lather was under the horse's saddle and some foam was clinging to its mouth; its beautiful eyes were dull, and the gay Castilian prance for a while was forgotten.

The traveller, whose brown leggings and cloak and hat were thickly floured with dust, led his horse up the hill by the bridle, pausing once or twice with the reins hanging loosely over his arm to look at the panorama below, at the lights that were appearing in the fishermen's huts on the island, and the copper-coloured clouds that were hovering in the west.

The horse drooped its head and looked patiently down the hillside each time they halted, and pricked

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up its ears when *la oración* came rolling across the plain from the Cathedral of Santa Fe.

"I think," said El Chopo, smiling to himself, "that there must be some truth in the old legend after all. Scarcely has *la oración* died away when down comes the wind from the mountains sure enough."

And he glanced at the horse, for it was shivering.

At the outer gate of the college he tied up his horse, then climbed the steps and strode towards the door, his spurs jangling and his heart beating fast with a flood of recollections. As he neared the jasmine-covered windows he threw off his broad-brimmed hat the better to be recognized in the dim light, and felt no little satisfaction to find himself remembered, for the great door swung open before he reached the threshold.

A few minutes' waiting in the vestibule and the priest beckoned to him from the head of the staircase which he climbed two steps at a time, and, seeking the well-known doorway, found himself in the presence of Padre Ignacio.

Padre Martinez had just gone out with a pile of books in his arms and was half-way down the dark corridor when the traveller stood at the doorway, but he heard El Chopo's footstep and halted and turned round just in time to see him enter.

"Ha!" said the priest to himself, "so Sir Mystery is back again!"

And then he went slowly onward towards his room, pondering deeply and biting his lip.

When El Chopo opened the door the room was dark, the balcony thrown open, and the night breeze from the mountains was gently stirring the tree-tops of the orchard.

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For a moment the Father Rector paused, his bulk silhouetted as a black outline against the sky; then he came suddenly forward and took El Chopo by both hands but did not speak.

The last couple of years had aged him more than a little, and this sudden emotion was all too much for him at first.

The young man for his part laughed quietly as one laughs when an anticipated pleasure comes to pass, and thought to himself that his uncle was perhaps bewildered at this unannounced return.

When Padre Ignacio recovered himself he took off the young man's cloak with his own hands, and, pushing a chair towards the table, rang the bell.

His summons being answered, he bade them bring food and wine, all of the best, and set them before El Chopo.

"With your indulgence, my son, I will light no lamp," said he. "The moon will look in at us anon, and, truth to tell, my old eyes ache to-night."

"As you will, uncle," replied El Chopo. "None but a Vandal would ask for an artificial light in such a place as this. In the French town whence I came, one cannot sit at meat and smell the orange-blossom and listen to the gushing of the water down the orchard. Sweet smells, sweet sounds, how often have I missed them; how often at eventide have I thought of you; how many times at night have I dreamed of this plain of Santa Fe and its air of eternal peace, its sleepy life of lotus eating, the chimes of the Cathedral that sound across the plain at *oración* and *ánimas*, even to the little devils that clap their wings and shiver in the mountains when they hear it!"

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"How long have you been upon the way, and by which road did you come?"

"It has taken me ten days from Madrid, of which I spent two in Córdoba. Every league seemed to lend a new charm to the landscape as I came towards the South. In Madrid I heard an Andaluz laying down the law in a wine-shop as I passed, and the rhythm of the dear old accent made me halt to listen. Like a fool I needs must stay to drink the health of his sweetheart. I was not there more than ten minutes and he swindled me out of two dollars. But he did it with such an excellent grace that I was half-way down the Prado before I realized that he had cheated me."

Father and son laughed heartily at this incident.

"So Carrasco did not catch you?" said Padre Ignacio.

"I gave him a wide berth. What is one man alone against so many? The pistols in my holsters are only good for two men at most. I pray you, by the way, let them take in my horse awhile."

The Father Rector rang his bell and gave the necessary orders to a lay brother, then, pausing with his hand upon the door, asked of El Chopo where he slept that night.

"In Santa Fe, I suppose," replied the young man. "No doubt the *Fonda de Francia* will serve me well enough. Tell them I am a Frenchman."

"Let Andrés call at the *Fonda de Francia* on his way home," said Padre Ignacio, "and bespeak a bed for this gentleman, and stable room for his horse."

"Though a far greater than I once lodged at the *Fonda del Trini* of Cinco Caminos," said El Chopo, laughing and looking towards Padre Ignacio, who was reaching down wine and glasses from the cupboard.

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"But *he* was a sour old friar," replied the priest, "and you are a dashing young cavalier."

"Enough of cavaliers!" laughed the other: "here's to your health, my dear uncle. Nay! but afterwards you shall drink to mine."

The young man rose to his feet, bowed to the priest and raised a glassful of golden Amontillado to his lips.

"¡Hola!" cried the Jesuit merrily. "What marvel of French courtesy is this young man? ¡Nada! You have done it so prettily that I needs must pledge you back, though it make my head ache in the morning, and, what's more, I must see your face, for the tongue smacks of France, and who knows but what the face may be altered as well?"

Padre Ignacio lighted the lamp, and folding his arms gazed with serene features at the young man who stood before him. The more he gazed, the more evident became the gloating in his eyes, and his lips were all but trembling when he saved himself by moving towards the table, where he filled himself a glass of wine, and turning to El Chopo, with one hand upon his shoulder, said, as he lifted the glass, "Your health, my dear nephew! Long may you live, and may God bless you for ever and keep you in all His ways."

The latter half of this brief speech seemed to arouse some memory in the young man's mind, for his face grew clouded and he passed his hand over his forehead and looked away.

When the lay brother brought in his meal, El Chopo turned to the ewer and basin in the alcove beside the bed, at the Jesuit's invitation, and having swilled the dust from his hands and face and roughly brushed himself, he sat down at the table.

"My baggage should already be in Santa Fe," said

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he, "unless Carrasco has detained it. They say you have a barrack of Civil Guards?"

"There are many changes. Don Ramón González is dead."

"I know it. God rest his soul!"

"Of course you have heard of the Protestant campaign against us in the South?"

"Against the Company? I have heard something of it. Yes. It had started before I left."

"It has grown apace as ill weeds will."

El Chopo ate with appetite. The Jesuit stood beside him, anticipating his wants, sometimes pacing between the balcony and the door as was his habit when excited, then coming back to gaze down at the young man's shoulders, to hand him a fresh plate, or to pour him out more wine.

"You must not think," said the guest, "that because I have been in France I have cast my Andalus skin. You keep on pouring me out more wine! Good uncle, you will make me drunk. Now let me show you that I am yet a Spaniard."

And rising from his chair he pushed the wine on one side, fetched the earthen water bottle from the balcony, and raising it above his upturned face, poured a long thin stream of icy water down his throat from out of the nipple, and continued thus pouring for several seconds.

"Stop!" cried the Jesuit laughing, "you are full of water to your throat."

"It is a Spanish vice," said El Chopo, lowering the botijo without having spilled a drop, "this gluttony of cold water, that far countries have taught me to be proud of."

"Yet in other things they teach us to be ashamed."

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"Ah!" said the young man moodily, throwing himself into his chair, "they have taught me many things I would unlearn. One thing, however, I thank them for. Santa Fe, that I always loved so well, is now my paradise. It is the only home of rest and true contentment. I come back with eyes that are blind to its imperfections, for they can only look upon its charms. Maybe they magnify them, the result is just the same.

"Give me, I say, a cottage in the vega of Santa Fe, God's sun above my head, the orange groves to shade me, the clicking of the water-wheel as the lazy ox goes round, the chirp of the cigarrón, and the whisper of the Mediterranean. Give me health, give me my daily bread, a snatch on the guitar at eventide, sweet zephyrs as I lay me down to rest, and where's the man that cannot be contented?

"¡Viva Andalucía! madre, querida, perla de las perlas! 'The garden that God chose to rest Him in upon the seventh day, when He had made the earth,' as the legend says.

"When first I looked down upon the vega on my way from Córdoba my heart leaped within me, and I resolved that I would never say good-bye to it again. I am a son of the people and shall always so remain. My hunger of inquiry is over, satiated almost before I had begun. I saw in front of me two paths and stood at the meeting point.

"On one side the struggle for knowledge and ascendancy. I marked the faces of those who fared along that path. In the distance a sun of success, a paradise of wealth, an *el dorado*, a joy of all joys for each one after his own heart, yet few attained it, and those who attained it scarce seemed the happier. At



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times I had a longing to push forward along that path, the infectious mania of the progressionist caught hold of me, and in that moment I was stricken with one of his maladies. The other path——”

“What is that malady?” asked the priest.

The young man rose from the table, pushed aside his chair, and going towards the balcony leant upon the breastwork. He stood as one that welcomes the evening breeze upon a head that is sore perplexed, but he did not answer.

Padre Ignacio repeated his question.

“The malady of which I speak,” replied the traveler, turning a steady gaze upon the priest, “is an affliction of the mind, and there is only one physician can cure me. That physician is yourself. Forgive me, my dear uncle, if by a mere chance word, spoken almost in soliloquy, I have broached a subject which I intended to reserve for some more fitting occasion. The pleasure of this meeting, the joy of my first night in Santa Fe, must not be marred by such discordant music, as later I must fiddle to you against my will. Even now I saw your hand moving towards the spirit lamp. How gladly I would accept a cup of your famous coffee, such coffee as all the realm of France cannot produce.”

The young man smiled cheerfully as he spoke the last words, and motioned towards the silvered copper kettle which stood over a lamp near the cupboard.

“I will make your coffee,” said the priest as he lighted the lamp, “but my own must remain untasted for the present.”

“Why?”

Padre Ignacio's back was turned. He stooped down and looked underneath the kettle to adjust the

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flame. As he did so there was a slight tremble in his hand.

"Because," said he, "I will taste neither coffee nor bread nor water until you name this malady, neither may I close my eyes in sleep with such heavy doubts upon me. Your words have terrified me. Perchance I imagine evils far greater than those that are pursuing you. Why have you not written oftener? I have sent you three letters for every one you wrote me. Not a word have you told me of any danger that beset you. But now, do you come to me and drop me a hint that makes my old blood run cold, then bid me talk of other things? Nay, nay! It cannot be!"

El Chopo drew the Jesuit towards his easy chair, and thrusting him gently by the elbow made him sit down; then, kneeling beside him took one of his hands between his own, first kissed it reverently, then retained it tightly clasped. For a few moments he appeared to be deeply moved, turning his face towards the balcony and inhaling the sweet perfume which the breeze brought gently from the vega and the orchard, then at last he spoke.

"What thought," he asked slowly, still gazing towards the night, "should be the first and foremost in the mind of an upright man?"

"The thought of his Creator."

"Aye!"

El Chopo gave this affirmation in a voice so solemn, so deep, and so profoundly sad, that Padre Ignacio bent upon him a look of agonized suspense. The young man, however, continued to avert his face, kneeling there still as a statue, an unspeakable gloom upon his features. 卐

"I have come to you," continued El Chopo, "as a

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sick man with a complicated disease might come to a great physician. As a victim of consumption, who believes that his lungs have gone, comes to the specialist and submits himself to the stethoscope, anxiously eyeing the doctor when he shakes his head, so I have come to you. And just as such a physical sufferer might promise from the bottom of his heart to carry out the physician's orders and prescription, so do I promise to submit myself to whatever discipline your wisdom may prescribe."

The Jesuit was pale, and his voice almost faltered as he replied—

"Let me first know your symptoms. Tell me the very worst."

There was a death-like silence, in which two hearts could almost be heard beating. El Chopo clasped the Jesuit's hand yet tighter, as though fearing that it might be snatched away from him, then he said—

"The name of my Redeemer is, for me, an empty form. When I use the name of God it is but a conventionality. You sent me out a fervent Christian; I have returned to you—an *infidel*!"

When this last deep word had ceased to vibrate in the evening air—and to both father and son it appeared to echo and re-echo round the room in every corner, and to swell high up above the orchard towards the stars like the announcement of a crime—both men remained as still as if they were of marble.

One might have counted a hundred before Padre Ignacio uttered any sound. When he did so it was half a sob and half a sigh, a sound produced by terror and amazement; then, falling back in his chair and clasping the young man's hand upon his bosom, he regarded him with a look such as David might have

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turned upon Absalom when he came before him with the blood of Amnon on his head, a look full of love and horror intermingled.

Into the eyes of El Chopo there came a glad light of thankfulness when he felt the warm pressure of the Jesuit's hands.

"If my malady be incurable," continued El Chopo, "it shall not be for want of submitting myself to whatever remedy you impose, however hard that remedy may be.

"When I tell you all this, do you wonder that I flee the new life and betake me to the old, whilst yet there remains to me the happiness that is left, the spirit of restfulness and contentment, the power for enjoyment that my southern emotions can still afford me? Who knows but what such emotions are the mainspring of religion, and possessing them perhaps my faith may yet return? After all, have not the poet and the artist——"

"Stop!" cried Padre Ignacio, rising in terror from his chair. "You know not what you are saying. Religion has naught of such things!"

He paused in the middle of the room, and there came over him a recollection. As in a dream he saw himself again in early youth. In a few moments the struggle of those days passed before him once more. The young would-be logician who warred with the dogmatists and almost convinced himself that the truth was false, the sensationalist who surrendered to an idle coincidence, the scene at early dawn—all these things came over him. "Emotions!" Why should this youth make use of such a word? Had he delved more deeply than his predecessor? How truly rang the note, and yet how solemn!

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"Forgive me," said the other, "if my words appeared blasphemous. It was not my intention. I find in religion a fund of great beauty; I doubt if the world has rightly understood what religion means; I doubt if I do myself. But its meaning may be more lovely than any one yet has realized. My great desire is to approach it along a different path, to view it from a different standpoint, and my stumbling feet cannot select that one point in the valley whence the Deity may be seen in a light that is true and consistent. It is to you I come for guidance."

"Alas!" said Padre Ignacio with a heavy sigh, "you have wandered from a path into which I may never, perhaps, be able to lead you back. You are stumbling into a morass. This talk of 'emotion,' of 'poetry,' proves to me how desperate is your case. Oh, my God! That this, of all things, should overtake you!"

And the priest's melancholy grew more and more intense. One terrible thought made him almost shudder. Could this be chastisement?

Had God abstained from branding his offspring's body with some disease, only to infuse a yet more dreadful taint into his understanding?

"See!" cried El Chopo with a sad smile, still on his knees and holding out his hands, "is not this already half the battle? Here am I longing with all the strength that is in me to be brought back. Will you not help me?"

"This is a task that must take much time," replied Padre Ignacio.

"But—there is hope, you think?"

"Be the malady ever so terrible, whilst there is life there is hope. I will say more, the very fact of your

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longing for salvation would appear, at first sight, to carry us many miles along the road. Alas! there is another way of looking at it. If, with all this keen desire to believe, you have battled with Satan in vain, the enemy must indeed have strongly invested the citadel, and how can I, a poor sad priest, hew me a road through such a dense array?"

"Yet you are the only one who could hope for victory when leading such a forlorn hope as this."

Padre Ignacio thought awhile; then going to the book-case he selected three small volumes, two of them in French, and brought them to El Chopo.

"This poison," said the Priest, "was conveyed to you in French?"

"Not in the first place. Yet French works confirmed me in my unbelief."

"I thought so. And, like the true homœopathist, my first attack will be delivered in the same direction. Take these three books and come to me when you have read them. Meanwhile, that I may analyse the poisoned water of the well you have been drinking from, and duly prepare my antidote, send me under seal such books of evil genius as may be among your baggage. After a couple of days I shall be fully equipped to meet you in fair fight, till then—we will talk of other matters."

* * * * *

Some days elapsed before El Chopo returned to the Jesuit College, days of keenest pleasure in so far as his appreciation of the well-beloved landscape was concerned, and marked by excursions on horseback or on foot to view the familiar haunts. On each of these days, at the hour when people are wont to sit at their balconies, he passed by the house of Doña Carna

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González, and he seemed to have informed himself fully, for his eyes always fell upon the balcony of her room. Yet he never once caught sight of her, and this seemed to trouble him.

When he returned to Santa Fe at eventide each day, his brow was knit with a frown of deep abstraction, and often he would pace the beach of Cinco Caminos with his hands behind his back, treading the sand and shells without perceiving them, although his gaze was bent steadily upon them. His evenings he devoted to the books that Padre Ignacio had given him.

My pen is not equal to recording all the eloquence of Padre Ignacio's discourse, an eloquence subtle yet simple, and wondrously attuned to the knowledge and condition of his listener.

El Chopo, listening, admired him, and sighed most heavily to find his gaze focussed upon the frail analogy which lay at the base of the Jesuit's argument.

At first Padre Ignacio's attack was delivered with much confidence; but the enemy's defence, though unwilling and perfunctory in the commencement, waxed bolder as time went on.

It was not very long before El Chopo, for his part, had forgotten that he was there with a wish to be convinced.

He brought forth all his artillery, and indeed his weapons were far more modern than those of his adversary, who often paused and retreated before their fire, only to advance again along a different line.

Many hours passed over their heads, and they reasoned with each other until the dawn was breaking.

When they arose the table was littered with books and manuscripts. Here lay a Bible, there a theological work, whilst a Spanish translation of Hamlet had

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fallen to the floor. Josephus lay alongside Voltaire, and an autograph essay of Padre Ignacio's was half hidden beneath the works of Plato, Bacon and Thomas Paine. And with whom lay the victory? With neither! The infidel maintained his position and sat securely in the trenches he would so willingly have surrendered. The Christian, not altogether discouraged, yet somewhat perplexed by new veins of thought he had never as yet been called upon to trace, drew back upon his base, surprised to find the enemy so well equipped. But there was this difference.

Whereas El Chopo was listening to arguments which he knew of old—though perhaps much better expressed—the Jesuit was hearing new theories which were so strange as to be worthy of meditation.


It would be saying too much to record that Padre Ignacio's belief was suddenly undermined in this one discussion. He was firm of will, and having once decided, generally stood by his convictions. Moreover, one does not often forsake the principles of a lifetime between sunset and sunrise.

Yet this debate was the origin of much mischief, and caused a resurrection of old doubts. El Chopo, all unconsciously, was lending himself to that enemy who "came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way."

One sometimes sees a chess-player teach a beginner every move he knows, instruct him in gambits, attack of pawns and other subtleties, and, after many lessons, one evening the pupil gets the better of the master.

The case of Padre Ignacio might, in some things, be likened to this.

But I would use another simile. The bather who, whilst wading, strikes his leg against a rock does not



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remark the pain as being acute, and believes, very naturally, that the injury is slight.

Reaching dry ground, he bethinks him to look at the contusion, and then for the first time he observes that the wound is far more serious than he had thought.

This was to be the Jesuit's predicament on the morrow.

* * * * *

"Enough for to-night," said Padre Ignacio, "of this terrible task you have set me. To-morrow or the next day it shall be resumed. I must have time to analyse carefully your dangerous fallacies."

"'Enough for to-night,'" repeated the young man smiling. "Why, here is the rosy dawn," and blowing out the lamp he went to the balcony, whose persianas he opened wide apart.

"Look!" said the priest, "how yonder great orb of day climbs up the mountain side, flooding the orchard with gold. Even so may the Great Light dawn upon your darkness before many days have passed. Come into the balcony, glance to your left and right, listen to the birds that are twittering their matins in the pear tree, and the cigarrón who wakes to a day of gladness. You, with the heart of a Spaniard, can you believe that all this wealth of beauty is begotten of chance?"

"An appeal to my emotion!" said El Chopo sadly. "I cannot answer your question. It is difficult to see how all this can be the outcome of chance. Yet whoever created it, it was not the God that our forefathers worshipped. Our system of deities is half pagan, and the Virgin Mary is Diana of Ephesus."

When the young man spoke these words he was standing close by the wall which divided the Rector's

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room from that of Padre Martinez. A person standing upon a higher level might have seen a slight movement through the perforations of a ventilator which in winter time connected the two rooms with the outer air.

Of the interview between the Rector and El Chopo, several sentences, spoken louder than the rest, had found their way through this ventilator. Amongst others, these :

"Not the God that our forefathers worshipped. ' Our system of deities is half pagan, and the Virgin Mary is Diana of Ephesus."

Meanwhile, father and son, unconscious of any listener, stood together in the balcony watching the shadows dissolving on the mountains, the foliage in front of them glistening with dew, and the black figs which were ready to gather and only awaited the feast of San Juan.

Then arose a clamour from the little belfry on their right, and footsteps were heard along the corridors as the fathers trooped down to prayers.

"Come," said Padre Ignacio with a smile, "let me take your arm. It will not be the first time we have gone down to matins together, you and I."

"And do you not reckon it sacrilege, for me to attend your worship?"

"The Jesuit," said Padre Ignacio, "looks at such matters in a broader spirit. God takes not offence at the presence of an honest infidel, so long as he comes not to scoff. And at least you know how to respect the belief of others, though not sharing it yourself. You, of all people, have most reason to attend our mass, for you have more need to pray than any one."

"How may I pray?"

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“ ‘Ask and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.’ ”

And so saying the Father Rector leant upon the young man's stalwart arm and together they both went down in silence to the chapel.

It was the Eve of Saint John the Baptist.

* * * * *

La víspera de San Juan Bautista, and Doña Carna with Susana by her side, the mistress in black silk dress and black mantilla, the maid in black cotton clothes and a white blossom in her hair, had trudged all the way to the college by the pathway through the sugar factory, saving the dusty road and half a mile.

Matins were over, and Padre Ignacio, leaning on the arm of El Chopo, had walked once or twice up and down the avenue of palms, when Doña Carna, radiant as a blush-rose in the sunshine, her black silk skirts falling gracefully round her pretty figure, entered at the gate and came up the steps just at the moment when the Father Rector and his companion arrived at the end of the path and faced her.

The result was inevitable.

“ My nephew, Señor Nieto, returned from abroad,” said Padre Ignacio ; “ and this is Doña ——, but— you have met before, then ? ”

“ Señor Nieto was introduced to me in Salamanca,” replied Doña Carna in explanation of the young man's impetuous greeting.

El Chopo had only said a few words with his tongue, but this is what he said with his eyes, as clearly as could be :

“ Fair lady, had I spoken with you before I left Santa Fe, I had never gone abroad ; since I saw you, behold me back again ; and now, though you jour-

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neyed to the farthest corner of the earth, I have the heart to follow you."

And be sure Doña Carna understood him, for as soon as she looked him in the face she dropped her lashes, and, giving him good morning, murmured that she was already late for confession, and passed upon her way.

" 'Confession ! ' " repeated the young man, turning round to gaze after her and speaking his thoughts aloud, " and pray what commissions and omissions may a being like that have weighing upon her soul ? "

Whereupon he laughed, and stood there nursing his chin with his arms half folded, and watched the great oak door with its massive studs of iron as it swung open to the graceful visitor, without any knocking, and closed again behind her.

The Father Rector had watched the whole of this incident with close interest, and looked at the young man's face so earnestly that he surely must have read the light that shone in his eyes.

Had El Chopo been equally watchful of his companion, instead of so absorbed, he might, in his turn, have perceived a slight start, an involuntary movement of the hands, and the lips half opening, as happens to a groper in the dark when his eye receives the impact of a sudden gleam of light.

" Do you know this lady intimately ? " asked Padre Ignacio with a smile.

" No ! " said El Chopo with a long-drawn sigh (as who should say " Alas ! ")

" You think her comely ? "

" Eh ? Certainly, yes, I consider her comely," returned El Chopo recovering himself and resuming his walk with yet another sigh.



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“ People that know her say that her mind is yet more comely than her face.”

The other made no answer.

“ This evening,” continued Padre Ignacio, in a voice that was intended for soliloquy, and gazing far out to sea between the palm-trees, “ she will go down to the Guadalote with her maids at midnight, and baptize herself with water from the river. You remember the old custom on St. John the Baptist’s Eve, or shall I say ‘ superstition ’ ? ”

“ Ha ! ” said El Chopo, looking moodily upon the ground, and presently took his leave.

CHAPTER XVI

"On the eve of good Saint John
Nuts are ripe and figs are sweet ;
Every lad that loves a lass
Walks abroad his lass to meet."

(Imitation of an old Spanish Song.)

IT was etiquette in Santa Fe among the gentlefolk, even in the summers that came a month too soon, to let the black figs rot upon the bough rather than gather them before San Juan.

After returning from confession, Doña Carna spent the morning in the orchard with her maids, gathering the figs whose doomsday had sounded from the cathedral tower that morning.

San Juan had dawned in all his wonted glory. Preparations were afoot for the evening's celebration, though such work was partly demoralized by the fierce swelter of a midsummer sun. To keep him out, great awnings had been stretched from balcony to balcony across the main streets of Santa Fe.

In the quiet orchard, with its ironstone-coloured earth, the fig-trees themselves gave shade enough, whilst a sleepy buzz of insects told that the wasps and flies were as glad to see San Juan as anybody. Wherever a wounded fig lay piteous on the ground with its purple entrails split open to the air a great crowd of these marauders would come clamouring

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like vultures on a horse which has been left dead upon the battle-field.

To assist the kitchen-maids Tío Patas was present, and with him was the notary of a fishing-boat, engaged for the occasion.

It was found that the maid-servants declined to perch themselves upon the ladders whilst the men were on the ground; and further, as the ladders were only two in number, the girls undertook to gather whatever they could reach whilst standing on wooden chairs, leaving the men to scale the dizzier heights.

"An arrangement quite symbolic," said Doña Felipa, "of the two sexes and their relative scopes of action."

In a far corner of the orchard Susana was gathering figs. Towards her came Doña Carna, bringing another basket, lifted down the full one and gave her up the empty one.

"I did not catch his Christian name," said Carna.

"Whose? That gentleman with the French-looking face that we saw in Salamanca?"

"Aye! And this morning at the college. But, indeed, there's nothing French about him!"

"Well, he was wearing French breeches, I'd be sworn, and his look isn't altogether Spanish."

"That just shows your ignorance!"

"Well, he has been in France; you said so yourself, Señora!"

"What is his name though?"

"That is more than I know."

Susana shrugged her shoulders and Doña Carna sat down beside the basket, blew away a tiny red ant from the topmost fig, and leaning her bare arms across the handle and her chin upon her wrist, sat

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thoughtfully watching a gold and emerald lizard which was peeping at her from a hole in the roots of the fig-tree.

Presently Susana drew a long breath and started singing, at first ever so low, then louder and louder, then sinking into a lament when she came to the last few words:

'Keep this golden orange ever,
From my orchard gathered new.
Knife of steel it may not sever
Or my heart you cut in two.'¹

Doña Carna listened without looking up.

"Susana!"

"What, Señora?"

"He isn't so bad looking, eh?"

"Pish! I've seen worse!"

"I'll wager you haven't seen so very many better."

"One such was here last night."

"Who? Don Luis? Oh, as for him——" (A pause.)

"You were saying?"

"That makes *three* figs you've dropped since I've been here."

This caused Susana to drop another, and it fell splosh! right in front of the lizard's nose. This confirmed his suspicions as to the ominous nature of these rites, and, like a miniature flash of lightning, he shot back into his hole.

In the middle of a giant fig-tree was Tío Patas, and the notary was perched below him. Nobody was within earshot.

¹ From the Spanish.

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"Come, you shall give me five reals out of the twelve," said Tío Patas to the fisherman.

"Would you skin me like a fig?" moaned the notary, looking up through the foliage. "Have you no honour, man?"

"Honour and profit won't both keep in the same sack."

"Nay, but this is no fair manner of profit. 'Tis plain blood-sucking."

"Pish! 'Tis only milk-sucking. 'A gentle calf sucks her own mother and three cows more.' I am a 'gentle calf.' Hold your hat!"

Tío Patas shot three figs into the hat. The notary transferred them to a basket and put his hat on again.

"That makes the fourth," said Tío Patas to himself.

"Four what?"

"Figs in your hat."

"You only put in three," returned the other, taking off his hat to look inside.

"You've just taken one out."

The notary turned his hat round and round, and looked first at the lining, then at Tío Patas, who chuckled very much to himself and enjoyed the joke immensely.

"What I mean," said Tío Patas at length, becoming very snappish, "is that—¡vaya!—may the devil toast me browner than a coffee bean if ever you gather figs with me again."

"Take your five reals," grunted the other.

"Take your five reals," squeaked Tío Patas. "¡Ca-ra-coles! What a good grace to fling them at me with! This is gratitude! This is your return to me for all my influence! And what would you be earning if I hadn't dragged you in? Twelve reals,

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eh? He! he! he! Or six, eh? or shall we say *three?*"

"Four," replied the notary sullenly.

"Ah, *four*, to be sure. Four reals a day for dragging your guts out at the nets. Instead of which I arrange for you to receive *seven* reals paid in cash—seven reals have I found for this animal" (here he raised his face and hands to heaven, in parenthesis, and the whites of his eyes glistened with pathos), "and *look* at him! Take but one glance at his face!"

Tío Patas held the boughs on one side and the fisherman, as though conscious that all the saints above were crowding to the nearest chink to look at him, carefully hid his face and became very busy with his work.

Meanwhile, up the hillside above Cinco Caminos, and even through the streets of Santa Fe, every mother's son who had a pair of arms was carrying faggots, chair legs, broken props, old mats, old boxes, old bedsteads, and discarded furniture of every shape and kind.

For the night was to witness a terrible Auto de Fe, a crying in vain for mercy by millions of hapless beings. Ask not their name, these legions doomed to the stake; let me tell you they were notorious back-biters and had never known baptism of water. To the flames with them; it is enough!

From the sea-shore came ribs of old fisher-boats, and all manner of flotsam and jetsam which they piled along the streets. The Municipal Serrenos assisted the arrangements, and marked off the number of paces along the road 'twixt bonfire and bonfire. The Guardias Civiles looked on with folded arms. On Sunday they would wear white breeches and march

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down to the bull-ring four abreast with fixed bayonets to awe the excited mob and prevent their scaling the barrier between "Sol" and "Sombra."

At the bull-ring men were carrying hurdles, whilst others prepared holes in the ground with iron crow-bars. The feet of the hurdles were then inserted in the holes and rammed round tightly with pebbles. Behind the hurdles came planks of wood and boxes, the whole palisade being lashed together with ropes of sogá. This palisading was funnel-shaped, the small end leading to the door of the courtyard or "corral," the wide end lying in the direction of the road from Cinco Caminos.

On the Sunday after San Juan a magnificent bull-fight was to take place, and this was very much talked about.

Firstly, it was the bull-fight of Saint John the Baptist, and if Saint John the Baptist's name is not sufficient guarantee for a first-class bull-fight, I have lost my opinion of the saints!

Secondly, eight bulls were to be fought! No ordinary half-hearted six-bull affair, *eight* mighty "Bulls of Death" that very night were coming down by the road from Valamo and the mountains, and in all probability a ninth, in case of a mishap.

What a buzz of voices amongst the youngsters as to who was going up to the pass to see them come pelting by, and who was afraid! There were even those who had arranged to sit in the middle of the road lighting cigarettes till the bulls were almost upon them, but—"man proposes, God disposes." There is that in the legs of a man that will not sit still when ten hundredweight of beef are hurled at him out of a cannon.

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Thirdly (and this was causing more talk than anything), Carrasco had spread a proclamation that if every other person in the bull-ring were an agent of secret police, and those in between them Guardias Civiles, he would be there in person and view the fight from start to finish.

You may guess that with these themes of conversation the buzzing of a bee-hive in which every bee was the size of a full-grown man would be but a mild description of the nightly clamour in the cafés.

The quality of the coffee being suited to a certain daily output, when the output was doubled, the quality was halved. And if you are a Spaniard, please observe that this fact passed unnoticed. I need say no more in proof of the feverish vibration attained by the public pulse. And "Would he?" and "Wouldn't he?" and "Of *course* he would, and snap every joint of his fingers in the nose of the Guardia Civil!"

Many who came into the principal café would stand on tip-toe at the doorway, cigarette in hand, surveying the sea of faces with eager eye.

What were they looking for? A friend? No, they had bet that before San Juan they would sit at the same table with Carrasco, and they were looking for him under every broad-brimmed hat.

Those with black whiskers got terribly stared at, to be sure. And it is my firm belief (such is the Andaluz character) that if any of these gamblers had met their man, they would have deemed it an honour to take coffee with him, and sooner than call the police they had cut their own ears off.

In the great central Plaza fronting the cathedral a score of booths had been erected, and toys, flowers, fans, sweetmeats, and a host of other commodities

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were disappearing into pockets all day long. There, were gold-fish and canaries, moreover, and even little tortoises that looked very wearily from side to side, then blinked their eyes and pulled their heads in, a movement, I suppose, equivalent to shrugging their shoulders at mankind. The hubbub at night was deafening.

There were merry-go-rounds, there were conjurers and gymnasts.

For those skilled with the knife there were sugar canes, which being thrown into the air had to be so caught on the edge of the blade as to split them from end to end. There were lottery boxes in which the prizes were sweets and tobacco, the number being decided by a spinning index.

Then, for the studious, there was literature. More battle, murder, and sudden death for twopence-half-penny than you could buy in the library for twenty dollars! And some of the works were illustrated. "The Road to Heaven and the Road to Hell," for instance, was a triumph of subtlety in colours, displayed on the side of a booth. There were seven stages in each direction. This enabled people to put their fingers on the exact spot so far arrived at in their pilgrimage, and probably accounted for the road to heaven being much greasier than the road to hell.

Around the square the various establishments had every window thrown open; and though the chemists' shops and clubs and cafés were neither so numerous nor so imposing as they are to-day, they sheltered a goodly crowd of idlers who located themselves at the open windows.

Hundreds of country-people had come into town, and their picturesque costumes lent a warm tone to

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the black and russet of the townsfolk. Though even the latter had broken into colours so far as the fair sex was concerned, and many a beautiful silk shawl of Manila went sweeping past the critics in the cafés and many a fair face feigned to be unconscious of their flattery, but failed in the attempt.

One or two *majos* might be seen, though most of them had come from inland villages where Dame Fashion moves but slowly.

They were dressed in close-fitting jackets of bright-coloured velvet with gold ornaments on the sleeves and shoulders, and sashes or fajas round the waist. The trousers were also decorated with tinsel work down the seams, and in one or two cases white silk stockings were in favour.

It may well be imagined that the scene looked out upon by those inside the cafés that evening was dazzling to the eye. Here a gaping countryman in lashed brown leather leggings with tassels ; there a coy girl of eighteen with a high comb fixed in her hair and a red carnation on one side of it, a silk network handkerchief covering her heaving bosom, and white silk stockings peeping from beneath her black skirts ; yonder a gipsy with mutton-chop whiskers and a conical hat ; silk balls on the crown and brim of the hat ; behind him a priest with the brims of his hat turned-up ; behind the priest a handsome Civil Guard in black and white, relieved by scarlet and gold ; ten paces to the left a *majo* in emerald green ; on the Cathedral steps three cripples begging, their rags a perfect study in russet and red ; in a doorway two ladies in black silk, with high combs and mantillas, laughing behind their fans. Add to all this an incessant chatter of people whose one aim was

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to be amused, the good humoured badinage of men who collided with each other, the occasional strumming of a guitar on one or other of the balconies, or the sound of the gymnast's horn to call attention, the clatter of coffee-cups on tables, blowing of whistles in booths, clapping of hands, yelling of boys, barking of dogs, and crying of babies, and I think you will have some idea of the great square in Santa Fe on the Eve of Saint John the Baptist.

Moving in and out amongst the crowd was El Chopo, and his face spoke eloquently of his appreciation. Already he had exchanged his French clothes for others of a homelier type, and, consistent with his desire to be one of the people, his attire was more modest than belonged to his wealth and education. Now he would pause to watch a gipsy-woman presiding over her frying-pan and *buñuelos*. Again he would stand beside a booth to see a fat mamma buying her daughter a fan, or make himself a way amongst the crowd to watch the conjurer, he would follow a couple of countrymen round the fair to hear them talk, or mount the Cathedral steps to view the panorama from a distance.

His every movement spoke of the enthusiast, severed for a while from a scene that his heart loved best, from a scene which his sojourn abroad had taught him to idolize, and now he was taking his fill.

El Chopo was not so absorbed in these surroundings, however, as to lose all count of the time, for he now and then looked at his watch, as though an appointment were in question, and when half-past eleven was chimed from the Cathedral he turned his back on the fair.

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It was a beautiful night, the moon being just on the wane, but yet so pure and silvery as to render the cloud of dust along the road to Cinco Caminos as visible as if a searchlight had been placed every few yards along the way. Vehicles of every description were filling rapidly and driving away in the moonlight towards the river Guadalote. Into one of these conveyances climbed El Chopo, and was whisked away helter skelter across the Arroyo and bumped from side to side as the coach flew madly from one rut into another and lurched in every direction.

Ten minutes brought him abreast of the Fonda del Trini, and a glimpse at the entrance, whence issued a flood of light, showed one the vine-covered trellis beneath which a *majo* and *maja* were dancing a bolero. The onlookers clapped their hands in time with the music, and the castanets rattled in rising or dying cadence as the dancers grew fired with passion or fell into smiling voluptuousness.

Arrived at the wooden bridge which crosses the Guadalote, El Chopo sprang down from the coach and paid the driver his fare, then leant upon the balustrade of the bridge and gazed on the rushy banks.

People were walking along the river on both sides, crackling in amongst the willows and poplars, and plunging knee-deep among the bulrushes. Two bonfires had been lighted upon the left bank and others farther away along the right. Some of the people carried lanterns, and these contrasted prettily with the moonshine in the water. Sometimes one would hear the laughter of the girls when their sweethearts floundered into treacherous water-weeds.

As El Chopo leant upon the balustrade a guitar suddenly twanged upon the left bank behind him, and,

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after a rambling prelude of many chords, a man's voice began to sing :

To Saint John of old there came
Men in Jordan;
Seeking Paradise they came
All in Jordan.
If for me Manola's eyes
All my Paradise comprise.
Tell me how may I baptize
Not in Jordan.

This died away, and the guitar, rising and falling for a few moments, broke into the minor when a woman's voice answered in plaintive tone :

When we quarrelled yester e'en,
Wicked tyrant !
Fell my lattice bars between
(Cruel tyrant !),
Fell the tears adown my cheek,
Kissed thy head and wet thy feet,
Christened thee a Faithless Cheat
And a Tyrant !

The refrain so pleased El Chopo that he found himself humming it again and again as with hands behind his back he strolled along the water's edge from group to group. After a little while he reached a point where the noisier element, the lanterns, guitars, and singing, all disappeared, and arriving at a clump of willows which appeared to mark the limits of the path, he paused to gaze yet further in the moonlight. It was then that he perceived a carriage drawn up some thirty paces from the river, the driver motionless upon his box and a lady seated in the carriage all alone. Opposite this carriage, but kneeling at the water's edge, were Doña Carna and Susana.

The young man strolled towards them as one who

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comes by chance ; yet in reality his heart was beating faster than before, though not so fast as Carna's when she looked up and saw him. As far as Carna was concerned she would have allowed him to pass by with only a distant "good night." But El Chopo was determined it should be otherwise. He stood there resolutely in front of her, and persistently engaged her in conversation, and with so good a grace, so courteous a deference, that little by little she yielded, and at length was surprised to find herself quite at her ease and talking as if she had known him for many years. She laughingly referred to her presence beside the river and hoped that he would not find her superstitious.

"It is a quaint old custom," replied El Chopo, "and the world would be uglier without it."

"Padre Ignacio said you were his nephew," she continued, looking towards the opposite bank of the river very hard.

"Yes."

"But he did not tell me your name of baptism ?"

By some slight token, an inflection in her voice, a light in her dark eyes, El Chopo became aware that the question was not prompted by mere curiosity.

All too late Doña Carna comprehended that she had shown an interest in this stranger which might disarm her were he to return it. Then it occurred to her that it would not be very bitter were he to do so, and thus she forgave herself.

"I have never been baptized," he made reply ; then after a pause, continued, "I was once a poor fisher-boy on the beach of Cinco Caminos. I worked in your father's Fábrica. They called me El Chopo."

Doña Carna, looking upon the Vizcaíno's stalwart

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form, remembered her father's praises of him, and his past history.

" 'El Chopo, ' " said she ; " I do not like the name."

" Most sweet lady, I only await a priest as fair as you to do the christening."

Doña Carna blushed deeply, but presently controlled herself, and looking upon him in all seriousness, replied :

" I am no priest, and may not baptize you ! "

" In that you are mistaken. Give me a name, and all who speak of me shall call me by it."

What was this charm in the balmy moonlight evening that made his words so thrillingly sweet to her ? What witchery of this night of fairy revels could have whispered so foolish an impulse as that which now took hold of her ? For, after a pause, during which Carna seemed to be a prey to conflicting ideas, she suddenly turned towards El Chopo, and with a smile that was half nervous and a voice all faltering bade him bring her water in his hat that she might christen him.

In a moment he was stooping down by the river's edge among the willows.

Just as he was about to scoop the water in his hat a long black water-snake wriggled out from among the rushes and darted away on the surface of the stream with rapid and undulating motion. It made him shudder.

The idea flashed upon his mind that this was a sign of ill omen ; then, laughing at himself, he filled his hat with water and quickly returned.

Susana, smiling and astonished, held the water, and Doña Carna, when he knelt down, dipped her fingers in the font and, looking at Susana, cried laughingly :

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“What shall we call him?”

“Why, Señora!” said Susana. “Is it not the Eve of San Juan?”

“Of course! Then we will call him Juan.”

And so saying she sprinkled his head with water and told him that his name was Juan.

CHAPTER XVII

"I would not wish
Any companion in the world but you,
Nor can imagination form a shape,
Besides yourself, to like of."

The Tempest.

AND now, good reader, since a very fair lady has chosen this person a name, would it not be rude in us to call him El Chopo any more? Assured of your answer, in future his name is Juan.

Meanwhile Doña Felipa, seated in the carriage, had scarcely understood the events that were taking place beside the river.

In the moonlight she had perceived a biped in a cloak approach her young ward, had puckered her forehead with wonder and strained her eyes when he went to kneel down by the river; but when he came back hatless, knelt at Doña Carna's feet and apparently received her benediction with laying on of hands, the old woman's bewilderment was great, and she floundered out of the coach and waddled towards the river like an anxious hippopotamus when the hunter attacks her young.

Susana emptied away the water and shook the hat.

"Don Juan Nieto," said Doña Carna, "has brought me water that I might dip my fingers in it."

This explanation sent a thrill through the young man's heart for two good reasons.

In the first place, that she was evidently in earnest

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about his name ; in the second, that she endeavoured to conceal what had been happening.

His eyes met hers, and in that moment they understood each other. When he gave her a look of gratitude she was unable to return his gaze steadily. Her lashes fell with a consciousness she could not overcome. Her feelings first swayed towards contentment, and she told herself that however deeply she stood committed she would not undo what her impulse had bidden her to perform. Then she flushed hotly and was aghast at her foolish predicament.

When Doña Felipa understood that the new-comer was no less a person than the nephew of Padre Ignacio, her manner recovered its repose. Even had she wished to read the riot act she certainly would have found it impossible, for just at that critical moment a group of people came towards him, three ladies and two gentlemen. The ladies were the widow, Doña María Lopez and her daughters Lola and Concha. Mariquita, the eldest, was staying with an aunt in Barcelona.

In Santa Fe the widow and her two daughters nightly prayed that Mariquita's journey might not be in vain, and be sure that Mariquita's applications to heaven for a husband were not less frequent or less fervent. Three golden ounces had it cost to pay the diligence, and God alone knew where the return journey was coming from !

However, sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof ; to-night was the Eve of St. John, and Lola and Concha were happy and light-hearted as only a Spaniard can be when the wolf is at the door.

The fourth person was José Ramos, returned from Salamanca, determined not to miss an Eve of St. John in Santa Fe.

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The fifth and last of the group was our Captain of Civil Guards, who bestowed upon Juan, as he saluted him, a look which might have made a more timorous man feel ill at ease. I must tell you that Don Luis had matured a very pretty plan.

Doña Carna having proved as cold to him as the far-away snow of the Sierras, Don Luis conceived that he might perhaps make her jealous.

Lately he had been paying marked attention to Concha Lopez, an attention warmly appreciated until its origin was understood.

José Ramos was a distant relation of the widow Lopez, and when he saw the mother and two girls looking sadly at the fans in the Plaza, he had forthwith put his hand in his pocket and, in order that he might not be accused of being partial, bought them a fan apiece, which pleased them mightily. Whereupon Don Luis had joined them and offered to conduct the party to the river in a coach. And here they were.

First of all the girls had to wet their faces and wish for husbands within the year, and this caused much amusement.

The three men were made to stand apart whilst the girls ran away laughing, followed by Carna, the two elder ladies, and Susana, and for fully ten minutes there was such a sound of merriment from the rushes where the girls were christening themselves, that Saint John the Baptist surely must have wished he were on earth again.

Having assured themselves husbands within the year, and having set the water a rippling in the moonlight as if it were much amused, Lola and Concha touched up their hair, adjusted their combs and mantillas, and came back to the lonely men, who, of

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course, had a few mischievous jokes saved up for them, such as : "¡ Hija ! If you only dip your face you'll only get a *share* of a husband." "Best dip your arms and legs." "We would have held your clothes for you," and so on. To which the girls replied "that it was not for husbands such as *they* were that they had come all the way to Guadalote ; of that they might be sure," and other retorts of the kind.

Then they all held a council of war.

Clearly they must climb the hill by the Jesuits' College on their way back, and view the fires and fire-works from the height.

So the carriages were summoned and they drove along the road to Cinco Caminos. José sang them a song and the girls clapped time with their hands when they came to the chorus, the widow overlooking such frivolity in view of the solitude and in honour of San Juan.

Don Luis was rather glum. He had hoped to make the fourth in Carna's carriage, but Doña Felipa was too quick for him, and Juan was seated beside her before the captain had time to say a word.

Arrived at the *Fonda del Trini* they all alighted, leaving one driver in charge of the two vehicles.

"For you had best get down," said Doña Felipa to Tío Patas, "and help me up the hill."

Then they went slowly climbing up the road towards the college, first José Ramos with Doña María on his left arm and Lola on his right, then Don Luis with Concha, then Juan with Carna, and lastly Doña Felipa, panting very hard and leaning harder still on the arm of the kindling Tío Patas.

José Ramos : "Just on the right of the college,

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that's where we want to stand! You can see the whole vega of Santa Fe, and the town and the island. Look! There goes another rocket!"

Doña María: "Oh—h—h! Look!"

Lola: "Yes, mamma, and look behind you at the island; some one has lighted a great bonfire in the middle. It looks like a town afire!"

Don Luis: "Within the year, said I? Why, within a month more likely, with such a face as yours."

Concha: "I make myself no allusions, and I am not fond of coarse flattery. I am neither so fair as to kill nor so ugly as to fright a man."

Don Luis: "Nay, but——"

Concha: "What is that light upon the road yonder by the cross? What are they doing?"

Don Luis: "Two or three soldiers squatting along the roadside by the light of a candle. Now you can see what they are doing, playing cards."

Concha: "And the candle in a bayonet! How strange!"

Don Luis: "Still, that is not what I was talking about. You keep flying away from the subject. Now look here, to put it plainly——"

Concha: "¡Señor mío! And do you think that I have not seen which fire you were fanning? And pray would you have me lend myself to such clumsy antics? Don't ask me to help you cook your stew or perhaps I may upset the pipkin!"

Don Luis: "You are very cutting. And yet you were very kind."

Concha: "¡Claro! Suppose there is a girl whose every moment is fettered by poverty. Her clothes are last year's clothes turned inside out. Her food,

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garbanzos, and bread as hard as the feet of St. Peter. There comes a coxcomb riding upon a horse and dressed in scarlet and gold, not too marvellous a being, but still with money in his pocket to buy himself a wife. Why, Señor, the girl is only human if she forgets the old proverb and——”

Don Luis : “What proverb ? ”

Concha : “ ‘Never marry a clown for want of a gown.’ Why, the girl is only human if she overcomes her scruples, pretends to fall in love and——”

Don Luis : “Pray do you mean that all that applies to you and me ? ”

Concha : “If the cap fits—— ! ”

Juan : “You must make fun of it if you choose, but it is the truth. And you—I suppose you never thought of me again ? ”

Carna : “Oh—yes ! I do not so easily forget people.”

Juan : “I remember every word you said to me, and I to you. ‘Hope,’ you told me, ‘was like laurels, which bear no fruit whatever but are always green ! ’ ”

Carna : “No, that surely was not what I said ! ”

Juan : “Aye ! That you did ! And I turned it over and over in my mind. All night I sat up thinking of it——”

Carna : “What *laurels* ? A powerful opiate ! And to keep a man awake withal——”

Juan : “——and, ‘Alas ! ’ thought I, ‘this lady is surely very pitiless. She would let me hope for ever without reward. At least,’ thought I, ‘she might have given me a plain answer ! ’ ”

Carna : “And you a *scholar* ! ”

Juan : “Why so ? ”

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Carna : "¡ Señor mío! can logic and philosophy give a man no better reasoning than that? "

Juan : " Ah, there is no schooling, Señora, to teach one divination of a woman's mind. "

Carna : " 'Tis just such men as you that go snaring and never catch a bird! You would stand in the middle of a field with bag wide open crying, ' Come, fly in my little dove! ' "

Juan : " Ah then there was a meaning in what you said? Oh, pray do not hide your merriment! "

Carna : " I cannot remember, Señor. Tell me, did I sigh when I said ' laurels ' ? "

Juan : " No; but you looked most wonderfully beautiful. "

Carna : " Oh look! look! Listen, it is just going to burst. Oh, what a bang! Look at the sparks—like a besom all down the sky! It reminds me of the flaming fiery sword at the gates of Paradise in our picture of Adam and Eve. "

Juan : " Rockets, I believe, belong to the other place! Señora, I have something to tell you, if I dared, yet I fear your answer——" "

Carna : " Well, then, do not tell me! Hark! Is not that Doña Felipa calling to us? Let us wait a moment. "

Tío Patas (to himself) : " I wonder if the old porpoise expects me to pull her up to yonder summit in this fashion, and my arm nearly dragged out of its socket! This is the occupation of a mule! " (To Doña Felipa) : " I pray you, Señora, walk on this side of the road, it is much smoother for your feet. Would you like to change arms? I fear that your right arm must be growing tired? "

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Doña Felipa (puffing very hard): "Ouf!—Pouf! —Man, you—have—no strength—in you. I—would rather—keep—to this—side. I can—hold—much better."

Tío Patas (to himself): "Yes! Hold like a limpet! I wouldn't like to be shipwrecked with you! Santa María del Carmen, if penance counts for aught I should——"

Doña Felipa: "What is it—that you keep—muttering about? I believe—you are unwilling!"

Tío Patas: "'Unwilling,' Señora, I? I caught sight of the stone cross yonder, as we rounded the corner, and it is my custom to murmur an 'Ave María' when I pass. Will you rest beside the cross awhile?"

Doña Felipa: "No. The others—have gone past it."

Tío Patas (to himself): "And I wish *you* were beneath it." (To *Doña Felipa*): "Señora, I fear that I am walking too fast for you?"

Doña Felipa: "Not at all—not fast—enough! Look, we are—falling behind. Carna! Carna! Carna—a—!"

When they reached the open space beside the college and turned around, this is what they saw. In the first place the moon over everything smiling at the revels. On the far right the Guadalote, whence they had come, with half-a-dozen bonfires on either bank. On the far left, Santa Fe, whose houses concealed the fires down in the streets, but whose higher walls and balconies were suffused with a ruddy glow. Especially was this the case with the Cathedral. The lower square base of the tower seemed to be incandescent with a colour of cherry red, whilst the cupola reflected

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the ethereal moonlight and wore a bluish tint. From various points in the city dense columns of smoke flew upwards mingled with sparks, and indeed a stranger might have thought that the Goths and Visigoths were sacking it, for it looked like a town on fire.

Along the king's highway were bonfires at intervals, several in Cinco Caminos, one at the *Fonda del Trini*, two or three on the beach, and a mighty blaze in the middle of the island of Lagarto.

From the Plaza of Santa Fe a rocket flew up and burst into a flame of vivid green; from the Island of Lagarto rose up another and scattered a shower of orange-coloured sparks; from the village of Cinco Caminos there fled a third, plunged heavenward with the wildest expectations and fell to the ground abortive. It was sped by the village schoolmaster and had cost him a long day's pay. Cinco Caminos, however, was not without its display. A series of most wonderful fiery circles were noted by those up on the hill. They were made by a lump of wood fastened to a piece of wire, to the wire was attached a string, and the wood being steeped in tar and set on fire was set whirling by a youngster standing upon some eminence.

Some chose a barrel, but this limited the circle to a radius of six or seven feet. Others betook themselves to the balconies and with more than one advantage. For instance, when blazing tar fell down the backs of the spectators the offender was inaccessible.

From the far distance rose a faint clicking of castanets. This came from the *Fonda del Trini*, at their feet, where the dance was growing faster and the fun more furious.

They had been standing some little time and gazing at the panorama beneath them when a Jesuit novice

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came towards them from the gate of the college. "The Father Rector sent his compliments, and having recognized them, wished to know whether they would honour him by resting awhile in the orchard?"

Nothing loath, they followed the novice back through the open gate. In the porch stood Padre Ignacio and Padre Martinez.

Carna introduced those of her companions who were unknown to the fathers.

"We belong to the Bishop's flock," said Doña María Lopez, smiling.

"If covetousness availed me," replied Padre Ignacio, with a bow, "I fear that the Bishop's flock would lose three lambs to-night."

"How very civil are these Jesuits!" thought Doña María, and replied, with a sigh, "that the Bishop would never miss an old ewe like herself, for people were valued in the Cathedral for what they gave away, and four reals a month bought mighty little respect, God knew!"

"Here," said Carna, simply, "one is not valued for one's money, but for oneself."

The Father Rector, glancing at her, admired her artlessness and *esprit de corps*, but felt a twinge of conscience, for he knew the inner workings of the Company.

With that they passed through the college into the orchard behind, and mounting the terraces one by one found several chairs at the highest point on the opposite corner to the tank, and here they sat down at Padre Ignacio's invitation and found that the view was almost better than before. Cinco Caminos was blotted out by the trees and college, but the great plain on their right was faintly visible in the moonshine, and here and there

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it was speckled by a glittering pin-point of fire wherever there was a cottage or a finca among the sugar-canes.

Whilst they sat talking, two lay brothers brought some small tables from the college, and on each table set a lighted lamp, beside it a flask of wine, a basket of pastry, some sweetmeats and some fruit.

Scarcely a breath of air was stirring.

"I am surprised to find the college awake," said Doña María, fanning herself with a great display of the newly purchased fan.

"The college is supposed to be asleep," replied the Father Rector. "But, we are only weak mortals, Señora, and this display has tempted our curiosity. Thus it came to pass that, standing quietly in my balcony and hoping that Padre Martinez would reckon me asleep, Padre Martinez was in his balcony alongside practising the same deceit. Each looked towards the other at the same moment, and our guilt being thus disclosed, we met each other in the corridor and agreed to sit at one of the great windows over the porch, and keep each other company through the still watches of the night! Alas! We were not the first arrivals, by any means! Half the college was wide awake and whispering at the window in front of us."

"And the other half?"

"At the other window, Señora."

A young priest helped the ladies to Málaga wine and sweetmeats.

Padre Martinez came to sit beside Doña Felipa. The eyes of the Catalán priest seemed always to focus themselves upon the individual who was attracting least attention. When Carna spoke he was looking at Juan, who stood motionless behind her chair; when Juan spoke he had already finished with him and was

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scrutinizing the Captain of Civil Guards. When the Captain spoke, his gaze had shifted to Carna, and so on round the circle. When a pause occurred his eyes were restless in their sockets, he looked here and there and everywhere. Concha dropped her fan and José picked it up for her; noted! Carna gave her empty glass not to her cousin but to Juan; remembered! Lola spoke to José over her shoulder, and José shrugged his shoulders and smiled; entered and indexed!

"The good Captain must be persistently discouraged," he was saying in an undertone to Doña Felipa, his eyes on Carna's face.

"But the other you think——?"

"Yes, the other, the *Padre Rector* seems to think might be a desirable match. But with incessant watching, mind, incessant watching. How does she incline?"

"Have you not already noticed?"

"My dear lady, when I ask you a question will you honour me with a reply?"

"Pardon me. I meant to imply that it was so apparent. She is on the eve of falling in love beyond redemption. If I might suggest——"

"By all means! We like intelligent suggestions."

"I would suggest that you should decide now and finally. Do you know that before a week has passed I believe it would be beyond all human power to——"

"Pshaw! That is not a proper way to talk, my dear Doña Felipa. That is not our watchword. Betwixt the power of Heaven and the power of Man there is an intermediate power. It is that of the Jesuit. You must be prepared to make your ward in love with twenty men in twenty days if so it suits us."

"That is beyond the power of Heaven and Earth!"

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The priest bent a sudden frown upon her, then quickly changed his expression before any one could note it. Doña Felipa held out her hands and cast down her eyes with a sigh which was intended to reproach him for his shallow understanding of women.

Padre Martinez, however, knew quite as well as Doña Felipa how curious a thing to control was a woman's heart. His words were a mere formula of discipline, the refusal to admit impossibilities where the cause of the Company was at stake.

At this moment there was some little stir. Lola had been listening to the distant sound of the guitar down on the highway.

"Mamma," she said presently in an undertone, "this is like being in Church, we may not sing or clap our hands, and it is such a lovely night."

Padre Ignacio caught one or two words of this lament, and beckoning to the novice he whispered something in his ear.

The young priest, when he came back, placed a guitar in Lola's lap.

This was the cause of much merriment, for Lola was compelled to satisfy the expectant company, and nobody would relieve her of the guitar.

At length she planned a compromise.

"If you will sing, Carna," said she, "I will play."

Whether it was that Carna was feeling very happy and very sentimental, whether the young girl was glad to display her charming voice, or that Juan had begged her in an undertone to sing, I cannot tell, but forthwith she bade Lola accompany her in the following verses from a romance by Don Joaquín Pérez, the poet of Santa Fe, founded on an old legend. There were ten verses in all, but Carna chose the more important ones,

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trusting to her audience's memory for the words between.

It was a Sultan's daughter,
His fav'rite daughter dear,
Must wed an Arab lover
Before the coming year.
She begged the Sultan's favour
The city gates to leave
And view the Christian fires
On John-the-Baptist Eve.

* * * *

Uprose a mighty clamour,
The Sultan sat at meat,
"Now rouse thee, gallant Sultan,
Now rouse thee, I entreat,
Thy daughter for a Christian
Doth all of us disdain,
And side by side their horses
Are sped across the plain."

* * * *

The fury of the Sultan
Descended on the board :
"Get twenty men and horses
Before me to the ford.
If one of you behind me
Arrive but by a hair,
His head beside the Spaniard's
Shall make a bloody pair."

* * * *

The steeds can fare no farther,
So deadly is the chase,
The knight his ladye raises
And fondly does embrace.
Behind are twenty warriors,
Before them an abyss :
"Dear ladye, cover up thine eyes
And speed us with a kiss."

* * * *

Weep not, thou gallant Sultan !
Weep not thy daughter dear !

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Her soul it is with Mary,
Thy woe she cannot hear.
Tho' yonder fiery limits
So closely seemed at hand,
The ranks of God were nearer
Than the ranks of Ferdinand.

The last verse Carna sang very slowly, and the guitarist, either by experience or by instinct, sank the key three semitones in the prelude. Nobody appeared to care for speaking when Carna had finished, her voice had been so pure and her fervour so intense. None could doubt that the young girl in her imagination was passing through the tragedy she sang about; and when she came to

Her soul it is with Mary,
Thy woe she cannot hear.

her voice had fallen to a slow and measured dirge in rich contralto, and her eyes were wet with tears. All of those present regarded Carna's emotion in the light most proper to their instincts.

Thus Don Luis trembled with passionate love. Juan was deeply moved and could not take his eyes off her. Lola and Concha sighed for sympathy, and Padre Martinez thought to himself how useful this emotion might become if turned to good account.

The young novice with folded arms was watching the lovely face from beneath his lashes, he had found an ideal for his Madonna.

The Father Rector looked towards him, smiled, remembered and understood.

I find it difficult to describe the influence which Carna's personality had exerted, yet her voice and her emotion seemed to have supplied the one factor that was wanting on that lovely summer's night to make it paradise.

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Above them a blue dome set with myriads of stars that twinkled like the fires down yonder in the vega, around them the blossom of fruit-trees in first or second bloom; permeating all the scent of orange-blossoms, beneath them the blazing city and the deep blue sea, in front of them the lamplight reflected from the leaves and flowers. This silent panorama needed but one touch to endow it with a soul, and that touch had been given it by Carna, who infused her subtle charm of femininity into the very air, an essence above all others ethereal and pure, felt by all present though little comprehended.

After a brief interval Doña María addressed the Father Rector and wondered that the Jesuits should keep guitars.

"Not only have we guitars," said Padre Ignacio, laughing, "but we have those who play guitars, upon occasion."

"Upon what occasion, for example?" asked Doña María.

"Such an occasion as this," returned the Rector, amused at her curiosity and wondering if she thought the machinery of the Company comprised, amongst other items, a guitar. Perhaps it did!

Padre Ignacio then turned to the novice.

"Francisco, Andrés and Tomás, are they awake?"

"They are awake, father."

"Now comes their punishment! Bid them bring their instruments and play these ladies a snatch or two of music suited to the occasion."

In a very little time there came forward four novices, with a violoncello, a mandoline and two guitars. They took up their stand beneath a lemon-tree and played old-fashioned dances, gavottes and pastorales, most of

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their music being, as was natural, French or Belgian, survival of their recent exile.

Padre Martinez waited upon the ladies with a basket of sweetmeats in one hand and a flask of wine in the other.

Juan, taking advantage of the music, leant over Carna's chair and commenced to talk with her.

Don Luis watched him angrily for a while, then sauntered away towards the tank, looking upon the ground.

Lola looked at Concha, who made a face and shrugged her shoulders. José Ramos then came to sit between the girls, and soon they were chatting merrily and giggling behind their fans.

Said Juan to Carna :

"By some strange power or other you have made me very sad and very happy."

"As who should say 'you have told me many lies that are the truth' !"

"I mean your voice quite carried me away, it is so sympathetic. When the lovers cast themselves over the cliff I felt as though I had taken the leap myself."

"¡ Dios mío ! What one may do in imagination !"

"Señora, under the like conditions, I could do the same."

"For love of a woman ?"

"For love of a woman."

"The French women are very attractive, so they say. What is it that they are playing ?"

"French music."

"Ah ! I suppose you swear by anything French ?"

"I ? I have come back before my time. Santa Fe seemed to beckon me."

"And what was the particular attraction in Santa Fe ?"

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"A very fair sweet lady."

"Ah! That is a Frenchman all over! Racing half way across Europe in chase of petticoats! Were I a man I would despise such things. But, alas! I am sorry for you."

"Why so?"

"But yet I am still more sorry for this 'very fair sweet lady.'"

"Ah, it is well she has your sympathy, Señora."

"And I will tell you why. You fell in love—God save us!—with this sweet lady, in less time, and with less provocation, than——. I pray you tell me first, how long you took to fall in love with her?"

"Just in the little moment, Señora, that she swept her eyes towards me and swept them back again. Nay, I——"

"Enough! Here is a man, goes into a church (I think you told me 'twas in a church?), sees a very passable, mop-headed sort of woman sitting upon a seat with her fingers in her eyes. She opens one eye and looks at him and ; zas! his heart turns a somersault, and they carry him out in a swoon. Tell me now, Señor, would such a lover be faithful to his mistress the waning of a moon? Would not this same accident occur to him again?"

"Such men are unwavering in their fidelity."

"Pooh! Not a single man walks upon God's earth but his mind is like a weather-cock, a bye word of changeability. And thus it is that women's hearts are broken with their wickedness."

"A while ago you spoke in jest, but now, unless you mock me——"

"Nay, I speak no fables. I know what I am saying, Señor, and it is the bitter truth. The faithlessness of

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men is known in every house; it is a mere home truth."

"Well then 'home truths' are scandalous. For there stands one before you whose love is not of yesterday, and daily, hourly, that love is growing stronger, like some swift river as it bears towards the sea."

"A pretty figure of speech! It stands commended!"

"Ah, then you gibe at me?"

"I wish that this 'fair sweet lady' knew what to believe of you!"

"Believe? Let her believe that words cannot paint my love. Let her believe that a rebuff would leave this fair earth a desert, yonder bright sky a blank, the tomb my paradise. Let her believe that sun, moon and stars, earth's fruits, its flowers and perfumes, display themselves before my exalted senses in sweet melody whilst she is near. Let her believe no joy can be a joy unless it speaks of her; no nightingale can sing except of her; no *Angelus* that sounds but prays for her; no breeze of Heaven that blows but whispers to me her name."

"Ah, indeed you must not speak thus unless——"

"Unless, dear Lady——?"

"Leave me, Señor! For God's sake leave me whilst I remember that I scarcely know you——, hardly have spoken with you before——"

"That will I not until——"

"Ah, but this is cruel of you! Some sudden faintness has come upon me. You must not think I am weeping, for I am not, and I would not for worlds that any one should see me so. I pray you walk away a pace or two, for it is nothing."

"Aye! If you will walk with me. To yonder lemon-tree and back."

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"Has any one noticed me?"

"Not a soul! Tell me, must I go answerless?"

"No! You shall have your answer, sir, and it is thus: that this same lady of whom you spoke, being very foolish, discovered only an hour ago by the clock that she loved also. Not until this moment did she realize how miserable was her plight, and that if the words you spoke were spoken in lightness, no sea in all the world too deep for her to pillow her head upon its sandy base. And now, sir, that you have made me thus confess, and whilst we stand beneath this dark lemon-tree, look, here is my mother's rosary, with a cross of ebony that she and I have kissed full many a time, and you shall swear; stay——, why do you flinch and start?"

"Did I start? Nay, give me the cross! As you love me, come, give me the cross, dear mistress, and let me swear!"

"Ah! How strange! You seemed to flinch and tremble when you saw the cross! Well then, you shall swear to me—no! Come a little farther towards the chapel. Look, here is the altar window and someone inside at prayers, for there is a light of candles just showing through the window of Calvary."

"Give me the rosary whilst I kneel here below the window."

"Take it! Swear what you choose. I would not let it be said that I conjured you. Yet whatever it be that you swear, yonder is your Judge and Witness! Do you hope and believe in Him?"

"Aye! To-night I——"

"'To-night'?"

"You misunderstand me. Yes, I hope and believe."

"Then swear!"

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"I swear that my heart's service belongs to you, that I adore and most passionately love you and shall love no other. Be my fate measured by my faithfulness and bright be my reward as those stars in heaven if I respect my vow. If not, let flames more torturing, agonies more horrible, and——"

"No! no! Though you flouted me, it were a shame you should be burned. I would not have it so. Now kiss the cross."

"I kiss and swear."

"Let us be strolling back. The music has ceased and they are calling to us."

* * * * *

When Don Luis strolled away from the musicians he found Tío Patas seated upon the margin of that great concrete tank which, placed at the topmost corner of the sloping orchard, provided a store of water for the trees. A spring trickled in at one corner, and there was a sluggish stir at the opposite corner where water ran out to waste. Tío Patas was smoking a lonely cigarette and looking at the moon.

For his own part the Captain would not have said a word. He stood there moodily gazing upon the dying ripples, where a frog had plunged beneath the water on his reproach, and watching the gnats that sported above the surface.

The twinkling eyes of Tío Patas came stealthily down from the firmament and looked along his nose towards the Guardsman, then climbed up again, apparently lost in contemplation of the Milky Way.

The vestige of a smile had dawned upon his features, but an iron-grey stubble and a cloud of circling smoke tended to hide this symptom from the Captain and the frogs.

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Presently he spoke.

"Things march badly, Don Luis!"

"What things, my friend?"

"¡ Vaya! The young lady—does not seem to care for us!"

When the Captain understood that Tio Patas was poking his long nose into matters so very delicate and nice, he was at first undecided whether to take him by the collar and duck him in the tank or to treat him with withering contempt.

For some few moments he stood glowering upon the unconscious philosopher, who once more was lost in contemplation of the stars.

Eventually a different impulse took hold of Don Luis, and he decided upon another course of action.

He sat beside the old man, and thus addressed him:

"My friend, you have spoken truly. Things march badly. Yet one never knows what a day may bring forth, and where there is a will there is frequently a way. Now, it has occurred to me that you, being a sage and cunning sort of man, being a man moreover who can keep a secret, which I suppose you can?——"

"Inviolable as the honour of my mother."

"And, no doubt, she was very honest. You, I say, being a man who can keep a secret, might help me in many ways."

"Don Luis, it is common knowledge that the Jesuits owe their position in Santa Fe in no small measure to myself. They do not admit it. No! Is it likely that they would? And if I, though apparently so humble, have so heavily contributed to this great result, how much more might I effect in an affair of comparative simplicity, a mere—Pshaw! the midsummer dream of a child that knows not her own mind! Properly at-

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tacked, Don Luis, the problem is not so very difficult. After all, what is it? In a nutshell, to turn the silly fancy of a girl from yonder Jackanapes and focus it upon yourself. Were you ill-favoured, cross-eyed, or bandy-legged, the task might be of dubious accomplishment; but treating, as we treat, of a gallant captain, a strapping, handsome, dashing, straight-limbed——”

Don Luis made a gesture of annoyance.

The old man who had bent down leering at him, and was sweeping the stump of his cigarette in horizontal circles through the air at the exact rate of one revolution per encomium, paused in his speech, shrugged his shoulders, laughed, and sucked at his cigarette.

“Let us talk sense,” said Don Luis, bringing the flat of his hand down smartly upon the coping and causing a dozen splashes from a dozen timid frogs. “And let us talk like men of business. These are the conditions: in the first place, hold your tongue; in the second, study how you may trip yonder moon-gazer by the heels if it be possible; in the third, give me quick information of everything worth knowing. Above all things, refrain from sounding my praises in her ear. Believe me, your manner is anything but charming. Last, but not least, payment by results.”

“I accept the conditions, Don Luis, your hand upon it.”

The Guardsman hesitated, grew hot with shame, tossed him a twenty-real piece, and, touching his grimy hand with a very bad grace, got up and walked away.

Tío Patas watched him rejoin the group and showed every yellow tooth in his head, so winsome was his smile. Then, turning towards the frogs, three of whom appeared to regard him fixedly from the opposite margin:

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"Señores," said he, showing them the coin which glistened in the moonlight, "regard it well. This is the famous stimulant that caused the dog to dance,¹ and, administered in proper quantity, would even make Her Majesty of Spain foot us a fandango on this very coping where we sit. Can you blame me, gentlemen, can you blame me, if I endeavour to lay by a store of such potent medicine? Can you blame me, if I have been striving all these years to save me an independence? And now, at the eleventh hour, meeting with an ass who carries a goodly load of this same stuff, what if I ease him a little of his burden? In exchange, mind you, for value received, oh, yes, for value received—if possible. Zamora was not conquered in an hour, but under this hat lies patience, gentlemen, patience with ingenuity, suavity, discretion, foresight, and a host of other ingredients which were known to the Christian kings, and between them shall win me my Zamora. And whether in so doing they leave the one rival in the lurch and the other triumphant, or whether they leave the former rejoicing and the latter with a face like the devil when he looks on holy water, why, what is that to me? You do not answer, gentlemen; you admit that it is less than nothing."

Now the frogs, as a matter of fact, admitted nothing of the kind. For some moments they had been listening to a buzz of excitement which came from the group of visitors under the lemon-trees.

José Ramos was the cause of it.

Ever since one o'clock he had been taking out his watch at frequent intervals, looking at it, putting it back with a sigh, and crossing his legs the other way about.

¹ "Por el dinero baila el perro."

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When the music came to an end he rose from his chair and announced that much against his will he must say good-bye to the company there assembled. Naturally this resolution brought down upon him accusations of having a sweetheart waiting for him at the balcony, in which explanation Lola and Concha were foremost and most insistent.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said José at length, "between the suspicion of being in love and the imputation of being a bull-fighter, I choose the latter alternative without any hesitation."

"¡ Jesús !" cried Concha.

"Leave him alone," said Lola. "Our cousin is very honest. He would rather have a bull's horns in his back than a lady's lips upon his cheek, and he scorns the false politeness that would have made another man deny it. None of your French manners for our cousin !"

"Be it known, then," said José, without flinching at this sarcasm, "that within an hour, at most, the bulls come galloping through the pass up yonder between the hills. Already they must have left Valamo, and the pace is beginning to increase. Señores, I had intended to suppress my tastes in deference to our host's; but since you press me I will frankly admit that to see such a sight as this company of magnificent black devils, each with his tail in the air and his nose on the ground, scampering past in a whirlwind of dust and carrying all before them, to see such a sight as this I would even bid good-bye to such charming company and such courtly entertainment as this mornen tare before me."

With that José Ramos threw his cloak around him, and, stepping towards the Father Rector with his hat uplifted, bowed low and kissed his hand.

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Then there arose a buzz of excitement, for every one wanted to go and see the bulls come past, but nobody cared to admit it.

Don Luis asked Concha "would she like to go?" and Concha asked Lola. Lola asked her mother, who turned to Doña Felipa, and Doña Felipa asked Juan, and so it came to Carna.

Padre Ignacio had watched this by-play with silent amusement, and when Carna's laughing eyes were turned upon him—

"Señores," said he, "between the Jesuits and the bulls I beg you not to hesitate. I lament that you should have tarried so short a time with us, and I wish you sweet slumbers during what little portion of the night the bulls may leave you. Already it is half-past one, and if, on your return journey, you care to wait for early morning mass, you will find the visitors' room of the college completely at your disposal."

With that they left the orchard by a little postern which Padre Martinez unlocked for them.

Juan lagged behind a moment to bid the Rector good-bye, and the old man leant one hand upon the young man's shoulder, as if he were loth to part with him, and led him aside to where there was a bed of rosemary beside an old stone wall overgrown with passion-flower.

"I am summoned to Sevilla by the Provincial," said Padre Ignacio, "upon the Company's service, and in a week or two at most I must set out. The news has just arrived. My dear nephew, do not fail me; be with me whatever time is possible, that I may leave Santa Fe with my task accomplished, the enemy retreating in disorder."

"It almost seems to-night," said Juan, "as if his

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retreat already had begun. Pray for me, my dear uncle, for I yet hope you may avail."

"Aye!" laughed the Rector, with an airy wave of his hand, his eyes seeming full of brave confidence. "Young men pass through many phases before they know their own minds. I knew such a one, his state was far worse than yours! Why, do you suppose that we——"

Juan's hand was resting on the Jesuit's arm, and by a sudden pressure he called his attention to Padre Martinez, who was stooping in the shadow of the wall and gathering himself a sprig of rosemary. He did not seem to be heeding them and presently came forward on the path, breaking off the long stalk of his rosemary, and looking at them both as if buried in thought. Juan bade them good-night and caught up to Carna, who was already starting up the hill.

Tío Patas resumed his duty beside Doña Felipa with cheerful resignation, but this time they went in front.

"I beg you, Señora," said Tío Patas, "to put the best foot forward, for, unless I am mistaken, the bulls are nearly due, and as we are directly in the road I leave you to imagine——"

"¡Dios mío!" cried Doña Felipa, turning round to José Ramos, "let us scramble up the side; the bulls are coming!"

"If you will step forward somewhat more briskly, Señora, I think we may gain the pass before they come. Moreover, the rumble in the distance will give us ample warning."

With that José came to the other arm of Doña Felipa, leaving Concha and Lola to help their mother, an office they performed with peals of merry laughter,

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and Juan was helping Carna by the arm. The lovers were strangely silent.

They gained the pass in safety and found that a score of people were there before them.

The rocky walls on either side went upwards in steps and terraces, trodden by goats and sheep. Along one of these steps, some six feet above the road, they took their stand. In front of them was a ledge of serrated rock which formed a natural barrier.

Doña Felipa was panting in a most heart-rending fashion, and patting her corsets to make her heart lie down.

Carna, whose face was flushed with excitement, took off her beautiful silk shawl of Manila, folded it carelessly and placed it upon the rock.

To her right stood Don Luis, and Juan was next to her on the left.

Some people opposite had a guitar and were singing *seguidillas*.

Don Luis was just saying to José Ramos that they need not have hurried after all, when the latter cried "¡sh!" the guitar became silent, and a low murmur went round the pass, for every one had heard the sound of a distant rumbling.

During the next five minutes the smallest pebble falling upon the rocks would have raised an indignant hissing from the assemblage, for every one was thrilled by that most real and solid of all human joys—anticipation.

A couple of lads had crept along the rocks towards the crest of the hill and knelt looking out over the slope beyond the pass. In the far distance they saw a cloud coming along the road in the moonlight, and people who could only hear the noise of it watched the

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excited attitude of those who could both see and hear. Meanwhile the distant rumbling grew louder and came nearer. At first it had been only a rumour of coming events; then, from a sound like the falling of hail on a winter's road, it grew to a din like the chopping of mincemeat by half a dozen cooks in an adjacent room. This sound increased in volume, swelled into a roar, ascended to a roll of angry thunder, then every eye was strained upon the point of a lance which first appeared above the crest of the hill; after the lance, a broad-brimmed hat, then a pair of whiskers, a gaily tinselled body, a horse's head, his body, four hoofs and a tail, all flying for dear life.

The picador, whose clean-shaven lips wore a grim smile of confidence, looked straight before him. Ascending the slope, he had given a glance behind, measured his distance from the nearest beast, and saw that it was enough. Had his horse stumbled and fallen, his life had not been worth a *maravedi*.

The tail of the horse had only passed them by fifty paces when the first bull came galloping past. The dust that the horse had raised was as nothing compared with the mighty smother which now went flying upwards.

Doña Felipa fell back gasping against the rock, the girls with dilated eyes held their handkerchiefs to their faces. Tío Patas, having excellent accomodation, inhaled more dust than any three people present, and forthwith sneezed on Doña Felipa in the confusion. There was a deafening roar, a dim vision of some dozen black hides flying along the road, an angry bellow, an excited shout, a dense fog of road dust, and—the bulls had gone.

Behind them came spurring more horsemen, and

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a few men on foot, each with a stone in a sling, shouting hoarsely and running like the wind. But in those few seconds something had happened, and this incident it was that had caused the excited shout.

Carna's silken shawl had so fallen on the rock that when it came open it began to hang down towards the road.

At first her elbow held it in position, but when the picador arrived on the brow of the hill she raised her elbow, and—down fell the shawl.

Like the darting of an adder Juan was over the rock and, alighting on the dusty road, whipped up the shawl, threw it round his shoulder, and then fell flat as a lizard against the rock, for he had no time to clamber into safety.

The first bull swept past him without notice, for he kept to the middle of the road; the second, jerked his horn at him and missed him; but the third, who was abreast with two others, turned his head downwards and sideways, lifted his horn towards Juan's body, and laid open his right hand sleeve from wrist to shoulder as he passed him. Not only this, but he cut such a gash in the forearm that blood came spurting out and coloured Juan's shirt-sleeve crimson in a trice.

Thereupon Doña Felipa was for swooning.

José Ramos gave a low whistle and took out his handkerchief, but before he could reach the sufferer Carna had torn her handkerchief into three strips and was knotting them together. She seized hold of Juan's arm without flinching, ripped back his sleeve and firmly bound the wound. From his shirt-sleeve she made more bandages and wound them on the top.

Then she began to cry, and pray what was she crying for? Concha wanted to know and Lola wanted to

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know, but nobody was able to discover the reason ; and when they pressed her, she stamped her little foot ; so what were they to do but leave her alone ? When Carna began to cry, Don Luis was looking from her face to the shawl she had cast at her feet, from the shawl to Juan, and from Juan to Carna, and his brow was very dark.

On the road down from the Fonda del Trini he found himself for a moment alone with Tío Patas.

"Don Luis," said that worthy, leering at him, "we are doing badly. *You* are the man who ought to have jumped after the shawl."

"Friend Patas," returned the Captain, "get you behind me till my hand has finished itching to toss you over the cliff."

* * * * *

When the visitors left the orchard, the two priests sat together in silence for some minutes whilst the lay brothers and novices removed the tables.

When at last they were alone, Padre Martinez stood before the Father Rector as though about to wish him good night.

"I feel sure," said Padre Ignacio thoughtfully, "that we could not do better. Both of them are ours, and—*l'union fait la force*. Both of them are fairly rich ; their capitals, united, would make us such a vantage point—you comprehend me ?"

"Yes," replied the other, with a dryness somewhat tempered by deference.

"You are not enthusiastic, I know. You seemed to think this morning that we were moving too hastily."

The other folded his arms and bowed his head.

"Well ! well ! The die is not altogether cast as

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yet. For myself, I see every profit for us, and little or no disadvantage."

"The young lady I will answer for ; her principles are everything they should be."

"And her future partner ?" asked Padre Ignacio.

"I do not know," replied the other, and cast down his eyes.

The Father Rector leant his face upon his hand and looked along the orchard, heaving a long-drawn sigh.

"It will not be the only matter," continued the Rector after a pause, and with a subtle irony in his eyes and voice which the other did not at first perceive, "in which you have suppressed your own honest opinions, obedient to discipline. I cannot too highly praise the cheerful consistency with which you have carried on a policy so foreign to your own ideas."

"You allude to the Anti-Jesuit movement in Santa Fe ?"

"I allude to the Anti-Jesuit movement, yes. And I say that for a man who has concluded by the light of his own intelligence that the one and only policy should be militant, that the movement should be attacked root and branch, day and night, without cessation, for that man to obliterate himself, to take into his hands the mechanism of a completely different system, and to turn that mechanism silently and consistently to the very best effect as you are doing, this is a triumph ! It is a glorious victory ! It is a monument, my brother, to the perfect working of the Jesuit discipline."

Padre Ignacio had leaned forward somewhat in his chair, and, with a hand on either arm thereof, was looking up steadily into the other's eyes. As he went on, Padre Martinez little by little detected a certain

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modulation in his praise, and at length understood it just as clearly as though trumpet had brayed it from the house-tops.

For one moment he returned the Rector's gaze, then moved and flinched, and in that moment Padre Ignacio knew that private reports had been posted to the Provincial.

And Padre Martinez knew that the other had read his secret.

"Father, remain with God!" said Padre Martinez, and, slightly bending one knee, he kissed the Rector's hand.

"Go you with God!" replied Padre Ignacio kindly, and when Padre Martinez had departed he sank back in his chair and lost himself in thought.

"This summons from the Provincial," he said to himself, "is no doubt the outcome of a subordinate report from this good zealous man, of which I shall never even hear the tenor."

And, thinking of Padre Martinez, and of the summons that had come from Sevilla, the Rector fixed his eyes upon Charles' Wain high up in the heavens. Yielding to the lateness of the hour and the tranquility of his surroundings, at length he fell asleep and dreamt a dream. This is what seemed to happen:

As in the days of old, when yet he was alone in the little *Fonda del Trini*, he had wandered out at sunset, book in hand, towards the mouth of the river Guadalote, where it spreads out its sandy delta to the sea. It was mid-winter, and in the sky hung frowning clouds whose sharp outlines, quickly changing with the wind which moaned across the estuary, threatened a stormy night.

Already he had passed the seamost rushes and had

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reached that brackish waste where nothing grows, when a weird sound fell upon his ear, and, stopping to listen, he made out the despairing cry of a human being clamouring for help, the shout always ending in a wail. At length, after peering all around him through the gathering darkness, he descried amongst the logs and stones and boulders a something that seemed to move, and when he came nearer he saw that it was a man. The poor wretch was buried to the waist in one of the quicksands whose muddy surface was slowly creeping up and up towards his shoulders.

"Save me!" screamed the man, and the priest drew near to him.

"Ah, do not come into the quicksand!" he cried again.

"How then may I help you?" asked the priest.

"Cannot you see that my poor body is beyond redemption?" moaned the man. "You could only sink with me, you could not pull me out."

"What then may I do?" asked the priest in anguish.

"Confess me!" cried the man. "Save my guilty soul!"

The Jesuit took his crucifix from his bosom.

"Speak!" he said, advancing as closely to the sinking man as the sand would safely bear him.

"Answer me," replied the other, crossing his hands upon his breast and bending upon the priest a look that searched into his very soul. "Are you a fit priest to confess me? Do you yourself believe?"

The mud had now reached the man's armpits, and he was sinking fast. Padre Ignacio seemed to be smitten dumb when he tried to answer this question.

"Answer me!" screamed the victim as the water reached his chin.

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Padre Ignacio struggled nearer to him upon his knees, but he could not unseal his own lips. He battled with the powers that held his mouth, he beat upon his breast in agony.

"Answer! answer!" came the dying sob of the penitent, but the very motion of his lips so ruffled the water that it leapt into his mouth.

Then, slowly, his face descended, the eyes, in unspeakable agony and reproach, fixing themselves upon the Jesuit with such intensity that he could do nothing more than kneel there mesmerized, dumb and tortured.

When the water had closed over the poor wretch's head and the ripples went circling outwards, then at last Padre Ignacio seemed to regain control over himself. He knelt yet nearer, so near that he could peer down at the head just dimly visible. The head fell back, a face looked up at him, slowly took form; then for the first time he recognized the dead face of his own son beneath the water and—awoke!

He rose to his feet, in agony, so vivid had been this dream, crying, "O God! O God!" then, falling upon his knees, sobbed out, "O God, can it be Thy avenging hand that has guided the enemy's lance to the weakest seams in my armour? Can it be that Thou hast been pleased to punish the crime of my youth *now*, in the ripeness of my age, *now*, through the medium of my child begotten in sin? Hast Thou so patiently bided Thy time, O Lord, that this infection might be conveyed unto me by my son, that the eyes of the father might dwell upon the two-fold agony of the older and younger generation? Hast Thou numbered me among those that hate Thee? Look down upon my struggle with mercy! Abide Thou with me in the eventide of life! Tear Thou from my polluted

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heart the growing weed of doubt! Teach me that Christianity is better than a mockery! Show me that the uniform I wear is more than an idle human fantasy! Forsake me not! Not this, O my Redeemer, not this! Or if it be meant for me, this spirit of unbelief, grant me for pity's sake that the heart of my child may be cleansed thereof. O Thou who wast able to cast out the unclean spirits from a man and cause them to enter into the swine that ran down a steep place into the sea, deal Thou with me even as with the swine of old. Banish Thou my soul down to the nethermost hell, so that my dear son may walk with Thee in Paradise!"

The old man's hat had fallen to the ground, disclosing his silvery curls, his lips were parted, his arms extended by his side, the hands opened outwards in mute entreaty, and his upturned face, on which the moonlight fell, was suffused by an eager yearning.

From a slit in the *persianas* yonder in the college two black eyes were straining themselves to watch the Rector's movements as he sank upon his knees in the shadows surrounded by the mist.

The eyes were those of Padre Martinez,

CHAPTER XVIII

Till all the crimson changed, and past
Into deep orange o'er the sea,
Low on her knees herself she cast;
Before Our Lady murmured she.

TENNYSON.

SAINTE JOHN THE BAPTIST was already one month old.

Underneath the old vine, where it climbed across the backyard on trellis-work before ascending to the windows of Doña Carna's house, stood Tío Patas. In his left hand he held one of the large brass reflectors belonging to the oil-lamps that hung from the parlour ceiling. In his right hand was a rag dipped in olive oil and chalk.

By dint of patient rubbing the reflector had attained such a brilliant polish that when he had wiped away the chalk and leered at himself he could see every stubbly hair on his grizzled chin reflected as in a mirror.

Having finished with the first reflector he took up the second, and resumed an old song that he had been singing to himself in a shrill nasal voice that sometimes broke down with an unexpected crack.

Now the song that Tío Patas was singing bore reference to a knight of great renown, a knight with many shields and quarterings, a knight that softened the heart of the sternest judge, that did not lose his authority "even though one cut him into quarters,"

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that made the herdsman companion to the duke, that won the kind glances of the loveliest dames in Christendom. When he arrived at the end of a verse, the name of this knight appeared :

" Poderoso caballero
Es Don Dinero."¹

"A mighty cavalier is Sir Money." The "Don Dinero" was rolled out with a great relish, especially the "o," which went quavering up amongst the green bunches of unripe grapes and "melted away into silence as if it were loath to cease."

In between the verses the old man's face was incessantly changing its expression. Now he would shake his head with a grunt and purse his lips, now he would lean his head on one side and stick his tongue out at his own reflection, then without any warning he would break into a noiseless laugh which puckered up his leathery face in a manner most uncanny to behold.

Tío Patas was building a castle in the air, and not one stone or stick or nail or brick of all that airy fabric but what was filched from his neighbour by compulsion or deceit.

In the middle of a verse Conchita interrupted him.

"My mistress says you are to fetch an azumbre of cows' milk from the house of Pedro."

"Tell your mistress the milk cannot be fetched."

"Why?"

"Because the old cow is dead, and even Don Dinero couldn't revive her :

Poderoso caballero
Es Don Dinero-o-o!"

"Is there no other cows' milk to be got?"

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"Of goats' milk—the sea ! But the only other cow that I can think of is a Jesuit."

Conchita disappeared, and Tío Patas continued his rubbing and singing.

Half an hour went by, and the second reflector was finished and laid down, when Conchita once more stood in the doorway shading her eyes from a roguish sunbeam which fell slanting in between the tendrils of the vine.

"Friend Patas, my mistress says, will you have the goodness to take this basket of confectionery, cover it over with vine-leaves, and bear it to the convent ; give her regards to Padre Martinez, and ask if he can spare her an azumbre of cows' milk."

"All that says your mistress ? "

"Yes, Señor ! "

"And what do *you* say ? "

"That you had better wash your face first."

And having left Tío Patas standing with the basket in his hand, Conchita skipped away.

Tío Patas put down the basket and carefully looked at himself in one of the reflectors. Being unable to discover any one portion of his face which was dirtier than the rest, he contented himself with a vigorous rubbing of his hands, and owing no doubt to the well known virtues of chalk and oil under friction, his fingers and nails acquired a rich mahogany polish, which glistened in the sun.

Having covered the puff pastry with vine-leaves and fig-leaves, and a great banana leaf over all, he climbed into the hay-loft among the fowls' nests, and shortly afterwards took to the road and made for Cinco Caminos.

On the way to the college he passed a wine-shop

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named *La Casualidad*, and called for a glass of *aguardiente*, which he paid for with two hens' eggs out of his pockets, a currency well known to the tavern keeper, who took them with a wink.

"And where are you going, friend?" he asked of Tío Patas.

"To the Jesuits for cows' milk, for Thursday night is our tertulia, and my young lady is for making a special punch, or a special custard, or a special egg flip, or what you will. And in Santa Fe are naught but goats—

Cabras y cabrones."

The old man whistled a well known ribald song of which the subject reminded him.

The barber of Cinco Caminos was seated on a bench, and alongside him were two muleteers, whose beasts were tied outside.

One of the muleteers burst out laughing at his recollection of the ditty, and this encouraged Tío Patas, who felt that he was being very funny.

"Thus goes the measure, gentlemen," he said, and raised his arms above his head and began to wriggle his old body about, snapping his fingers and mimicking a dancer. The counterfeit smile of voluptuousness on his grizzled face, the glistening yellow teeth and leering eyes, the dainty capering of his feet, and the contortions of his stomach so fascinated the muleteers that they swore he was a very merry fellow.

"And what might you have in the basket, friend?" asked the barber, when the dance had come to a finish.

"Some four-and-twenty morsels of puff pastry. This is a matter of exchange and barter, gentlemen, cakes for cows' milk."

Whereupon he raised the leaves and showed them

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a pile of most delicious confectionery, puff paste with almonds and apricots inside, a speciality of Carna's.

"Why, now I come to think of it," continued Tío Patas, "these trifles should go very well with a glass of *aguardiente*, and, after all, twenty-four is a funny number, so why not make it twenty?"

And he handed them each a tart.

"So our fisher-lad is going to marry your young lady?" said the barber, with a tart in one hand and his wine-glass in the other.

"There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip," said Tío Patas.

"Only an hour ago he was walking along the road," remarked the tavern-keeper. "What a mighty fine gentlemen he has become! To think that once he went bare-footed!"

"I met him in Cinco Caminos," said the barber; "he was talking with Don Pedro the Republican."

"Was he, though?" muttered Tío Patas, rubbing his chin reflectively.

"Short work Don Pedro would make of the Jesuits if he had his way," put in the tavern-keeper, leaning on his counter with folded arms.

"And of all the other priests, too," added the barber. "He would turn the churches into picture galleries."

"And the Jesuit College first of all, eh?" cackled Tío Patas ironically.

Thus they continued gossiping for half an hour, and Tío Patas having dropped into his element, laid down the law about religion in general, dealing with the Jesuits and Republicans in particular.

At length the muleteers got up to go, and Tío Patas, finding his audience forsaking him, picked up his

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basket, rearranged the leaves, and sallied forth once more on his road to the college.

When he approached the gates his face was wearing an expression of melancholy sanctity.

The basket of pastry was handed to the novice with a courteous message, and after a few minutes' waiting a priest beckoned Tío Patas to pass through the gate into the orchard.

Padre Martinez was pacing up and down the orchard with a book under his arm.

"Good morning, friend Patas," said Padre Martinez ; "sit down and wait awhile. They are milking the cow, the same cow you used to milk yourself, do you remember ? "

"Aye, Padre ! "

"And how goes your mistress ? "

"Very well, praise be to God ! and sends her regards to yourself and the Father Rector."

"The Father Rector set out for Sevilla a few days ago, so that will leave me a double share of Doña Carna's far-famed puff pastry for myself. And, *á propósito*, you must thank her most heartily. An *azumbre* of cows' milk is a poor exchange for the delicacies she has sent us. Come with me, and I will gather her a nosegay."

So saying, Padre Martinez led the way to a certain part of the orchard where roses and carnations grew, and gathering up his skirts fell to plucking blossoms one by one and handing them to Tío Patas, who commenced to make them into a bouquet.

"This," said Padre Martinez, "is a bed of rosemary we have planted since you left us. By the way, rosemary ! What was I thinking of ? Yes ! The youth who threw a stone at Padre Mateo the other

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morning and cut him in the cheek was wearing a sprig of rosemary in his cap. To be sure, that is what the rosemary put me in mind of."

"¡Jesús! Have they got to throwing stones at us?"

"So it would appear," answered Padre Martinez, stooping over a rosebush and carefully bending his hand to avoid the thorns, "so it would appear! I wonder if the sprig of rosemary had a meaning, or if it was merely there by chance?"

"I know not. But it would not take me long to smell it out, if you wanted the explanation."

Padre Martinez stood up suddenly with a dark crimson rose between his thumb and finger, straightened his back, and looked long and fixedly at the nose of Tío Patas, as though he were estimating its hidden capabilities.

"Could you so?" said the priest at length, stepping off the flower-bed and handing him the rose.

"Why, who could do it better?" replied Tío Patas, with a grin of confidence and an eye for possibilities.

The Jesuit seemed to meditate. He placed a hand on either hip, and his eager black eyes watched the busy fingers of Tío Patas as he bound the last turn of string round the bouquet.

"Then you shall do so," said Padre Martinez at length, "and you shall tell me, in confidence, anything you glean as to the hands that are pulling the strings in this conspiracy against us."

What was it that made Tío Patas pause in tying the knot? First he looked up towards the tank where Don Luis had spoken to him on the Eve of St. John the Baptist, then he looked at the priest, then at the bouquet, then up the orchard, then down the orchard, back to the bouquet and up at the priest again.

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In those few seconds an idea had come into his mind. Nay, it had *jumped* in, and now it was dancing about inside his cranium.

He tied up the bouquet, placed it upon the ground, and approaching more nearly to Padre Martinez whispered in his ear :

“ ‘ Breed ravens, and they will peck your eyes out.’ ”

The watchful black eyes of the priest were fixed upon him as though they would read his soul.

“ You mean——? ” said Padre Martinez.

“ I mean that I have seen the devil come hopping into Santa Fe in many strange shapes before now, but never did I see him so well-favoured and so cunningly disguised as he is at the present moment, God save us all ! ”

So intense was the Jesuit's concentration upon these words that he scarcely seemed to breathe, but stood there with folded arms immovable as a statue, almost grudging himself the necessity of speaking.

“ To whom may this refer ? ”

“ To a certain young man who is courting a certain young lady, to a certain young man who flies the red flag of anarchy, to a certain young man who secretly confers with those who are known to be our enemies, who consorts with rabid Republicans and speaks bitterly of the Jesuits, who would make your college into a picture gallery ! And there is more besides.”

Padre Martinez watched the speaker's face until his lips had ceased to move, and for some while after still remained watching him, like some great cat that has seen a mouse's whiskers poking out of a hole, and waits for the mouse to follow. At length he drew a profound sigh, not of sorrow, but of respiration in arrears, and asked :—

“ Has Doña Felipa seen aught of this ? ”



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"How should I know? Doña Felipa does not move among the people every day as I do. Moreover, with due respect to your mercy, a mittened cat is a bad mouser. Be that as it may, these two eyes have seen the devil's ears poking out from under his hat, and if other eyes haven't seen it, they will anon."

"Do you comprehend, friend Patas, what a very grave thing this is that you are telling me?"

"Aye! Graver than you think, Padre. Have a care that every window in the college be not broken before another fortnight."

"And are you sure of your ground?"

"Would that I were as sure of the road to heaven!"

Then came the Where? When? and How?

Such questions troubled not the ready brain of Tío Patas one jot.

He had heard *this* in Cinco Caminos from the barber, he had heard *that* in Santa Fe from the letter-writer, the *other* on the high road from a farmer, and as luck or the devil would have it, he did not contradict himself.

* * * * *

When Tío Patas reached home late with the cows' milk he had promised himself a good long hour for lunch in the kitchen and a few minutes' siesta in the hay-loft, for indeed he felt very well satisfied, and judged himself deserving of reward. He was therefore far from pleased when María poked a basin of rice and cockles boiled with saffron under his nose, and bade him "eat as if the devil were after him, for her mistress wanted the carriage at half-past three."

And Conchita, very busy at cleaning shoes in a corner, muttered something about "old rats that loitered by the way."

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"¡Ea!" said Tío Patas with a hand on either knee, and determined that no one should upset him, for just then he was feeling above all trivialities. "I haven't been so long in coming as your sweetheart. What a face! *What* a face to be sure! Go, cover up the milk!"

"The old skin has come back full of bad wine."

"Full of *hunger*!" said Tío Patas, turning up his eyes and patting his shallow stomach, "and even if it were wine, the wine is old, and age is a thing to be respected, whether in wine or men."

"Age that betters parchment and good wine has a bad way with addled eggs!" snapped Conchita, throwing down the boots, for some one was calling her in the patio.

"'Addled eggs!'" chuckled Tío Patas, turning to his rice, "I, an 'addled egg'!"

But gradually the saying rankled, for he was fretful of disposition.

On his return from the college he had spent another half-hour in the *Casualidad*, and had found the barber still seated there.

Every one now seemed to be in a hurry, and this sorted ill with the tranquillity to which he had been looking forward.

The first thing that happened to ruffle him was the clearing away of plates and knives and dishes by María under his very eyes. She left him merely the basin he was eating from, and forthwith brought a bucket of water and a flannel and sluiced the table, singing very merrily, and leaving him but a circle one foot in diameter wherein to enjoy his meal.

Next, Susana dashed into the kitchen with a pair of curling tongs, slapped them into one of the Moorish

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candelas, whipped up the rush fan, and commenced to make the charcoal glow, her other hand resting upon her hip.

Then she snatched them out again, whisking them about in mid-air to take the colour out, missing the nose of Tío Patas by a single inch (which made him jerk his stool back), and ran away laughing.

The last thing that happened was that Conchita burst into the kitchen like a whirlwind and made for the table drawer, whose knob was exactly central with the abdomen of Tío Patas, pulled open the drawer and thrust her arm into it, raking about at the very back for several minutes, and finally producing a pair of scissors.

Matters having reached this crisis, Tío Patas rose from his seat with a snarl like an angry monkey, and flinging down his spoon and waving his hand to them to take it all away, went fuming out of the kitchen towards the stables.

María made one bounce towards his basin, snatched it away with one hand, soused the coveted dry circle with a clout she held in the other, and went on singing over her pots and pans.

The ladies were going for a carriage drive, and in those days, with Carrasco here, there, and everywhere, it was better to face the afternoon sun than to be on a country road long after nightfall.

At half-past three the carriage was ready.

Not only was her carriage awaiting Carna when she came to the door, but Juan, all-expectant and mounted upon his Andalucían horse, had arrived that moment by the merest chance in the world, and with no better excuse than to ask them how they fared.

This being so, it was scarcely to be wondered at that

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Juan's way coincided with their own for some distance along the high road, and finally, having reached the outskirts of the town, it was too late to keep the engagement he had had in view.

"I think I had better ride with you as escort," he said laughingly, and tapped his holsters.

Gentlemen of Santa Fe, even at that date, seldom rode abroad with empty holsters, and, as a last resource in case they were caught dismounted, there were many who carried a Spanish knife tucked inside their waist belt.

In the carriage rode Carna, with a yellow rose beside the comb that held her hair, and black silk gossamer drooped down from the comb on to either shoulder. A black leather girdle encircled her little waist, and below the girdle came an upper petticoat. True to the fashion of those times also, black lace fell down from each shoulder and opened out fan-shape over her elbows, whilst her bosom was scarce hidden by a network of red silk cords.

Doña Felipa and Susana rode with her.

A summer awning of canvas had been spread over the carriage, and whenever Juan spoke with Carna he had to lean forward on his horse in order to catch a glimpse of her.

If old Tío Patas, when he climbed up into his seat, thought his young mistress was charming, what must Juan have thought as he leant forward in his saddle and caught spasmodic glimpses of those bewitching eyes, and the lips, with their Cupid's bow, half parted in a smile?

Carna that afternoon was all vivacity; her chatter was incessant, partly perhaps because Juan's horse was restive, and it amused her to watch his efforts to

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reply. Many times he would be in the midst of a sentimental phrase when the horse plunged suddenly forward or lagged behind, and left Carna laughing at him behind her fan.

The Andaluza is only happy in her sweetheart when she is either laughing at him or crying at him, for so God made women in Andalucía.

And to see the white line of pearly teeth between those pretty lips, the dimples coming and going in her cheeks, and the love-light turned to laughter in her eyes, this sight was worth the management of twenty such troublesome steeds; at least that is what Juan was thinking, and though I cannot ride I think the same.

An hour's driving eastward of Santa Fe beyond the pyramids of salt brought them to a rocky cliff overlooking the sea. Not a very high cliff, to be sure, for a waterway which had been cut down the hillside on their left continued sloping to the sea upon their right at such an incline that one might easily walk along after scrambling down some twenty feet of boulders beside the bridge.

On the bridge they halted, for here was a famous vantage point whence a view might be obtained of tranquil Santa Fe, with its towers and walls em-purpled by the distance.

Then Carna had a caprice to walk along the river-bed, and she was so persistent that Doña Felipa, after regarding the hazardous descent with startled eyes, climbed back into the carriage and bade Susana go with her. "For it were a pity," said she, "that your mistress should break her neck alone." Now Carna stood in no danger of breaking her neck alone, as Doña Felipa well knew. There was at least one other neck anxious to break itself on her behalf.

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So the carriage drew away to the shadow of a rock, and Doña Felipa waited with her eyes closed for screams of anguish. She waited so long in this condition that she fell asleep.

But now a very embarrassing question had arisen. Carna and Susana were standing upon the edge of the declivity, viewing the river-bed below. Each held her skirts gathered round her ankles in obedience to that instinct of all women when looking down a cliff. Once they set foot upon the stones down yonder in the bottom their perplexities would cease, but ah! the twenty feet of slope that lay between.

So what must Juan do but take Carna's hand, and this seemed very strange to her, but still she had the thought to go down first, and many a darting lizard fled away when those small buckled shoes of polished leather came seeking their hold among the herbs and stones.

And was it really necessary that Juan should clasp her hand so very tight? Perhaps it was, yet when he returned for Susana his grip was not so firm.

Having reached the bottom they found themselves upon a floor of natural stepping-stones worn smooth by the winter's flood, and in between these stones was trickling a lazy thread of water, greenish blue in colour, and no wider or deeper than one's hand. Here and there grew rushes, and along the red walls of ironstone that surrounded them were burrowings of reptiles.

To the lizards Carna was indifferent, for they were like old friends, but when a black and green snake lifted its head and writhed hissing into its burrow, she gave a low cry and clenched her hands, whereat Juan held her by the arm and laughed at her. Now they moved forward towards the sea, the cutting grew

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deeper, and presently, when they rounded a slight bend in the channel, they saw the blue salt water in front of them, bounded by the ironstone walls to left and right, and meeting the sky far off on the horizon. From the sea rose three pinnacles, one large and blunt with herbs growing on its summit, the others smaller and more pointed, naked of vegetation, washed over by the sea and looking black and sullen, as though they would fain wear a crown of green stuff like their neighbour.

The bed of the stream came to a precipitous end in the solid rock, and the fresh water fell three yards or more and caused a ring of foam. In those parts the highest tides are less than a yard, so that salt water could never flow back along the channel, though storms might cast it angrily in at the mouth only for it to return with a sullen roar, like some defeated vanguard that has found the foe entrenched. July, however, was at an end, and the Mediterranean was gentler than a lamb.

Sometimes a handful of foam would rise against one of the black pinnacles, as if the good-humoured water were teasing it with a kiss, and the pinnacle sulkily rebuffed it like a peevish boy.

In the sky not a single cloud, nothing but monotonous blue. Circling round the rocks were sea-gulls.

Carna seated herself upon a boulder close by the water and heaved a sigh; Juan came to stand beside her and found the sigh infectious; whilst Susana, wandering out of earshot, looked to east and west, threw pebbles at the water, pebbles at the lizards, sat down by one shrub, got up and sat by another, yet never once paid attention to Juan and Carna.

Juan was the first to speak.

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"In the carriage you were very talkative. Now you are very quiet."

"I had noticed it myself."

"What a beautiful scene around us!"

Carna looked at the sea, then at the rocks, then at the sky, then back into Juan's eyes and laughed at him.

"All scenes," said she, "in Andalucía are beautiful, this in particular. I have climbed down here before with my father, and that is why I brought you."

Juan stood silently regarding the pinnacles with his elbows on the rock for so many minutes that at length it was Carna's turn to complain.

"For a traveller just returned," said she, with a suspicion of reproach, "you have but little to say for yourself!"

"Why, how can I talk of science and philosophy to an Andaluza, and such an Andaluza as you, framed in such a picture?"

"Now you are going to talk love to me again! Can you do nothing but love me?"

"Nothing! Unless it be to adore you!"

"Don't be so wearisome!"

"Why, what would you have me do?"

"Cannot we find something sensible to talk about?"

"Very well; you choose the subject."

"As who should say that I have mighty little to choose from! Well, Señor! we shall see! Begin to catechize me."

Juan laughed and caught her humour.

"Geography," said he. "Where is Kamchatka?"

"What a name! Where is it?"

"In Siberia. Failed in geography!"

"And have you ever been there?"

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"No, never!"

"Then how do you know it is in China? Tell me where is the fountain of Nuestra Señora del Carmen?"

"I do not know."

"In the suburb of La Trinidad. Failed in geography!" Carna laughed merrily and clapped her hands.

"Very well," said Juan. "Complete failure of both competitors in geography! Now we come to history. Who was Charlemagne?"

Carna shook her head and pursed her lips.

"Who was Zacchaeus?" she asked suddenly, leaning forward. But Juan was very much in the same position as Zacchaeus. Ever so slight a shadow passed across the eyes of Carna when he confessed that he did not know.

"Zacchaeus," said Carna presently, gazing towards the horizon and looking very serious, "was the little man who climbed into a fig-tree to see our Lord come by. Did you not know?"

"I had forgotten."

Carna toyed with a handful of rushes that she had gathered near the bridge, plaited them together, undid them and plaited them again.

At their feet the blue water lazily heaved and fell, and fish came to play with the jet that poured from the rock, swimming round and round it and darting under it.

Farther out to sea the porpoises were playing, and beyond the porpoises were graceful *jaluchas* toiling on the deep, their triangular sails no larger than a gnat's wing in the distance.

In the west the sun was nearing the hills beyond Santa Fe and all was perfect peace—the silence before

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sunset. For the short southern twilight was about to gallop past, a thing of ten minutes, the sun's flying rearguard pursued by the shadows of the mountains. Juan leant upon the rock and looked eagerly at Carna. His eyes were filled with passion, and the young girl, in waywardness, refused to meet them, and turned to gaze seaward from between her half-closed lashes, gradually sweeping along the horizon until she could just dimly see him.

"Carna!"

"Why, the sun has set!"

"The sun has turned away from me."

"The *faluchas* surely are fishing in pairs."

"Turn your face to me."

He caught her little hand between his own and moved her so that she needs must look at him, and then she took refuge behind her fan, whereat he imprisoned the other wrist, and discovered a pair of lips and dimples that were laughing at him, two eyebrows that were doing their best to frown, and two eyes that were all love and sympathy and mischief. Reflected in her eyes he could see the distant horizon, the *faluchas* like tiny points of white, the sky and rocks, even to the sea-gulls that swept round the pinnacles.

"I wonder if the *faluchas* are catching much?"

"I neither know nor care!"

"You are polite!"

"I am in love!"

"That is just the trouble of it!"

"Why?"

"A woman can be so happy without proclaiming every hour that she is in love, without ever declaring it at all. A man must needs say so, and insist upon the woman's answering. I wonder why it should be so?"

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"And *are* you happy?"

"I do not know. You will not give me a moment to consider. Besides, that is another example of what I say. Why must I so roundly answer you? Men have no appreciation for the implied or the discreetly veiled. They only become fretful when they are left to make deductions about a woman's sentiments. Do you not remember the Eve of Saint John?"

"Yes, I have reason," said Juan, looking at his arm.

"Yes, because you have a scar upon your arm you think you have a reason. Well, Señor! that was not the only wound that happened upon that day!"

Juan pretended to look puzzled. Carna laughed at him, and looking into his eyes she sang that verse which Susana had been singing in the orchard, only one little month ago, just for its sweet memories—

"Keep this golden orange ever,
From my orchard gathered new.
Knife of steel it may not sever
Or my heart you cut in two."

Juan turned his head, observed that Susana was out of sight behind a bend in the narrow channel, then slowly drew Carna's arms towards him.

Carna's feet were off the ground, and so she was helpless to save herself from sliding off the boulder at the imminent risk of disclosing two yellow silk stockings. Her only safety lay in trusting to Juan's support, yet his hands were steadily receding.

"Juan! Juan!"

"Carna!"

Though Juan's arms drew backward, his face remained just where it was before, so that Carna's lips came presently towards his own and brushed them. The lovers kissed, and in that brief moment Juan saw

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that the gates of Paradise were dark, with a silken fringe, and whilst he gazed at Paradise the world stood still.

Then Carna, tingling with shame and happiness, recovered herself, and leaning upon her left hand traced circles in the rock with the end of her closed fan, whilst Juan, drawing a long breath, stood looking up at her with his eyes aglow.

"To-morrow then I may announce it at the *ter-tulia*?" said Juan.

"Why in such haste?"

"¡Preciosa! Until I proclaim it I am like San Lorenzo upon the gridiron!"

"I thank you for the simile! A moment ago I could have sworn your case was not so pitiful, though sure enough hot cinders were in it too. Help me down, good Lorenzo, for it is not safe to leave the wool by the fire."

"Nay!" said Juan, holding her two little wrists in one of his strong hands. "Tell me first, on Friday you are going to the fair?"

"Yes, Señor! And to service at the chapel. It is the Transfiguration of our Lord, and the 'Name of Jesus.' Will you not come?"

"I shall not be able."

Once more a slight shadow passed across Carna's face. She had only once seen him at church, and then—as an idle sight-seer, in Salamanca.

"And why, sir, pray?"

"Now it is your turn to be inquisitive. At what hour do you return?"

"It depends upon many things. Perhaps at nine. Why do you ask?"

"If I told you, you could not keep the secret."

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"It takes twenty women to keep a secret. One poor woman could not do so much alone."

"Well, I will sell you my secret for another kiss."

"¡ Señor ! There are no more kisses to-night. The one I gave you seemed to pain you very much, and it is the last, for it were a pity you should grow to like them less."

"That should I never !"

"Ay ! Do they not say that of kisses and soup the first is always the best ?"

"I will keep my secret until you pay me for it."

"It will grow so stale that you will throw it from you. Men part more easily with a secret for not being asked than women do for asking. Look, Juan, how the great sun has fallen behind the sierras, and has covered the Cathedral of Santa Fe with red-hot gold, and marked a red pathway, too, across the water."

Juan came close to her, and she leant her cheek lightly against his shoulder and clasped his arm, gazing towards the west.

"Why is it," asked Carna presently, "that the path only reaches half-way across the water towards us ? Look at the dark waves in between !"

"It is because we are standing so high above the surface," said Juan, after thinking for a moment.

"¡ Ea ! A man's explanation ! Look at it again. Do you not see that before us lies a path of golden glory, yet to reach it one must plunge through the dark waves of unknown futurity here below ?"

Juan leant his face upon his hand and gazed at the relentless black ridge of earth behind Sante Fe as it ate up the last morsel of the sun. Where he had gone

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down copper-coloured clouds were hovering, tinged with yellow and gold.

Slowly the gold died out, a dull, sullen blood-colour overcame the brighter tints, the blood-colour grew fainter, merged into grey and black, the pathway across the sea became a slightly perceptible brownish glow, the stars came out triumphantly, relieved of the sun's majestic presence, and Nature was asleep. And Juan was thinking that woman's way of regarding things was better far than man's, and wherefore seek plain Truth, since plain she be ?

Carna's head still nestled against his shoulder, her bosom heaved placidly with a loving contentment too great to be spoken, her right hand was in his.

They turned to look round the dark horizon on their left, where night had blotted out the sails, the porpoises, and everything. In front of them three dusky pinnacles could just be seen against the blue-black sky, at their feet the jet of water still gushed into the ocean with a sort of slow rhythm, caused by the measured heaving of the swell, which now shortened, now lengthened its path to meet the surface.

"¡ Señorita !"

Susana was coming towards them. Her voice echoed and re-echoed along the walls of the water-course.

"¡ Señorita !"

Carna gently released her hand with a sigh, slid down from the boulder, and answered Susana.

"¡ Señorita ! Doña Felipa is calling us from the bridge."

"Go before us," said Juan, "and call to her that we are coming now at once."

To gain the bridge more quickly and more safely,

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Juan placed his arm round Carna's waist, and half-way along the channel, with Doña Felipa's voice already audible, they paused and turned towards each other with one accord, and, clasped in each other's arms, they vowed once more, with low and tremulous voices, that come what might, for all eternity, nothing should come between them, then walked the remainder of the way in silence, hand in hand, until they neared the bridge.

That night Carna, her lamp put out, her balcony window open to let in the summer moonlight, knelt fervently before her crucifix, head bowed, hands crossed upon her bosom.

At first her spirit was bathed in silvery joy, joy that seemed to float downward through her window and kissed her bowed head, an all-pervading contentment she could not explain, for it was the first time Carna had loved, and her love was boundless as the ocean that was whispering beyond the orchard. Her face was towards the window and the light; the crucifix therefore, was hidden in the shadows, dimly visible in the reflection from the opposite wall and from Carna's white robe and face. Presently she became conscious of something strange. The Saviour above her in the shadows was strangely silent. In any other mood her mind could not have accepted so biassed a conception, her common sense would have swept it on one side.

Yet to-night her vision was far-focussed, and passed beyond all worldly logic into a realm of different government.

And the Saviour seemed strangely silent.

Then her conscience grew troubled, and she asked herself why this thing should be? Why should He be sad? In what had she displeased Him?

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The idea grew stronger, became irresistible, would not be driven away. Turning her eyes upwards towards the crucifix and clasping her hands, Carna saw His eyes bent upon her in loving, pathetic reproach.

Then she seemed to understand.

Stretching her arms out on either side, her lips moved, then with a long-drawn sigh she began to whisper to Him, and as she went on her emotion became more poignant. Her bosom, bared to the night breeze that stirred the leaves in her balcony, heaved with the fulness of her heart, and presently two tears came falling down upon her simple night-linen where it lay open around her shoulders.

Carna's eyes were seeing things in other worlds; her sense of hearing alike was transcendental. She was listening, when she had finished praying, to swelling music that floated down to her from afar, a Divine lament, sung in a voice too lovely and too pathetic for human understanding, a hymn yet a serenata, a romance yet a solemn dirge, a cadence of unutterable grief for that which is lost for ever.

"Not so! O my Redeemer!" cried Carna, "for Thee is my poor heart ever the same!"

Her eyes beamed upon the crucifix in the shadows with a light of infinite love.

After a little while the image seemed to her less jealous and reproachful. It called her with its eyes; she rose and lovingly kissed the ivory feet; her dark hair fell around the crucifix and against the wall; her lashes drooped and closed with passionate love; her white arms were held aloft, palms upwards, in sign of womanly submission, and there was a trembling in her throat.

Presently from a little cupboard she took two candles

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in two small sconces. These she hung upon either side of the crucifix, using the nails that had served on Holy Fridays for the crosses of the two thieves. Next she lighted the candles, and, falling upon her knees, steadfastly regarded the crucifix once again.

Ah no ! He had forgiven ! On His face was the smile of love and forgiveness, even for those who had driven the nails through His side and through His feet.

" Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ! " His face seemed to wear less of agony and more of contentment in the flickering light from the candles on either side ; nay ! Carna even thought there was something of gratitude in the look that He bent upon her. So different, oh, so different from the expression of sadness and reproach that His face had worn in the shadows !

At length a feeling of calm contentment possessed her. She lay down upon her bed, leaving the candles to burn out in their sockets as a tribute to the Saviour. Sometimes the breeze would rustle the vine-leaves round her balcony, and would brush back the flames of the candles, making them flare and smoke. Then onwards to her bedside, where it would gently caress her hair, playing with the stray locks around her forehead. Her arms were wide open upon her pillows ; she fell asleep with her eyes turned towards the crucifix, and a loving smile on her parted lips. In her dreams two dear faces were intermingled, one of heaven and one of earth, yet both were one. All was peaceful ; the whispering of the sea along the shore only made the moonlit silence more pronounced.

* * * * *

When Juan parted with Carna, and kissed her little

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gloved hand, it was already late for dinner. Yet instead of hurrying back, he rode swiftly through Santa Fe, clattered across the square and past the bull-ring, and made for the open road.

His pulse was feverish ; he felt that he could not sit down at any meal-table, and he had taken it into his head to gallop along through Cinco Caminos to the Guadalote, to find the spot where she had stood that night when she had christened him, and—who knows ? —to fling himself from his horse and kiss the ground.

“Cada vez que paso y miro
los sitios acostumbrados,
me arrodillo y los venero
como si fueran sagrados.”

“Each time that I pass by and look upon the well-known spot, I fall upon my knees and worship it as though ’twere sacred.” The mad unreasoning love of Andalucía had mastered him, in all its extravagance, its fierceness, and its jealousy.

Had not his father turned from the studying of his breviary only to find a pair of woman’s eyes bent upon him ?

Never so fierce a lover as Juan in this moment, with blood coursing through his veins at fever-heat, with flashing eyes and thumb pressed tight on rein as he galloped through Cinco Caminos and flew past the *Fonda del Trini*. This is no ground, Don Luis González, in which to sow the wind, though you were General of Division instead of Captain of Civil Guards !

On his return from the river he slackened pace a little and passed through Cinco Caminos at a trot. The villagers were walking up and down in the moonlight, and many people were in their balconies.

In one balcony was Don Pedro Gutierrez, the Re-



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publican agitator from Salamanca, who called to him. Juan reined up, chatted a while, and, rising in his stirrups, took from Don Pedro a cigarette. When he had lighted it, he waved his hand to the Republican, shook his reins upon the horse's neck, and turned towards Santa Fe. But half-way down the village he met the priest, the Alcalde, and the schoolmaster. The priest made a sign to him to stop, and bidding good-night to the Alcalde and the schoolmaster, said to Juan very meaningly—

“My son, I pray you dismount and come upstairs with me awhile, for I have something of importance to say to you.”

To explain this strange interruption I must go back a few hours, and, with your leave, I will commence another chapter.

CHAPTER XIX

This chapter, not being of a romantic nature, has
Not deserved a motto, and shews amongst
other things
Of some importance, how the barber went to
bed without
Shaving, and the priest without saying
his prayers.

WHEN Tío Patas, on his way back from the college that afternoon, called at the tavern *La Casualidad* the barber was still there, The wine being in, and the wit being out, Tío Patas told the barber in blear-eyed confidence that there was "like to be more fire-spitting between El Chopo and the Jesuits than there was in the devil's kitchen when the cook wrote a cross on the pancakes."

The barber bore the weight of this secret for nearly half an hour, then, meeting the priest at the cross-ways, pulled him into the shade, and in a voice such as one uses at the confessional told him that El Chopo had fallen out with the Jesuits, and it was as much as people could do to keep them from murdering one another. The priest took snuff at this news, and during the afternoon he turned the matter over in his mind as he went from house to house. He visited some hungry villagers, comforted them after his poor fashion, threw bad logic at a drunkard, and fell little

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short of weeping with a mother who had lost her first-born. For the priest was growing old.

His six fried sprats and six ounces of boiled chick peas were spread upon the board when he came home, and having washed down this feast with the last few drops of bad red wine from his corner cupboard, he clapped his hands loudly and sat thoughtfully looking towards the door.

A gasping blear-eyed old crone climbed up the narrow stairs.

"The coffee?" said the priest. The old woman looked surprised.

"That was yesterday," she said.

"Ah, true, true!" replied the priest. "To-day is Monday. Give me my hat." And moodily he went downstairs and sauntered along the street towards the barber's.

Already there were four or five people there, namely, the schoolmaster, the mayor (or *alcalde*), the "notary" of a fishing boat, the deaf and dumb cobbler, and the blacksmith. I did not include the barber, because nobody took any notice of him. He was seated beside the door upon a stool, and looked very meekly at each one as he spoke, though (barber-like) his glance always rested upon their stubble rather than upon their eyes.

"¡Señores!" said the priest, bowing in the doorway.

"Come with God!" replied the company, and made room for him upon the bench between the mayor and the notary.

The schoolmaster sat down in the operating chair but facing the company, and reflectively stroked his hand over three days' growth of beard. The barber rose from his stool and came towards him, but the schoolmaster waved him off. The barber sat down

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upon his stool with a sigh and folded his arms again. Financially it was all one to him.

"Gentlemen," said the priest, after drawing one or two whiffs from his cigarette in silence, "I have an interesting question to put before you, a question whose consideration has caused me no little thought, and finally has impelled me to seek your much-esteemed opinion, for in the multitude of councillors there is wisdom."

The barber rose from his stool, as though urged by some impulse, then, toppling the stool over with his heel, turned back in confusion, set it upon its legs and resumed his seat upon it, clearing his throat and looking out at the doorway.

"Now what," asked the priest a little peevishly, "what may *that* mean?"

"Nothing!" said the barber, clearing his throat again.

The priest threw up his arms and let them fall upon his lap, shrugging his shoulders in despair.

"We demand to know what *that* means," said the schoolmaster firmly. He had attained the habit of command.

"Well," replied the barber, trying to chuckle amiably, with some half-dozen stony faces turned towards him, "I thought that—in fact when the good padre remarked that—gentlemen, I spend one real and a half every night upon the oil lamp, and I thought that as light is not so necessary for discussions as it is for shaving, I might perhaps lower it the least little——"

"Stop!" said the priest peremptorily, holding up his hand. The barber stopped with his mouth wide open.

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"Put out the light!"

"Oh, as for *that* now——" began the barber in a deprecating manner.

"Put it out! Right out! At once!" The priest spoke sternly and pointed to the lamp.

The barber crept guiltily towards it and blew it out. The priest then lowered his arm, and fumbling in his pockets made remark—

"Note, gentlemen, what says our friend the barber. '*Light* is not so necessary for discussions as it is for shaving!' Is it not indeed? Search the writings of Saint Paul, and you shall find that *light* is the condition above all others that he considers necessary. Remember, my good friend, that the immortal spirit is cultivated by discussion, whereas the hair—why, we all of us here will be bald in a hundred years. And now, that you may see how the saints protest against such discourteous treatment and such illiterate remarks, Saint Antony himself shall lend a light to this discussion."

The priest was seen by the rays of the moon to rise from his chair. He set two small white objects upon the shaving table, kindled a spill, and lighted them.

"Those," said he, "are the halves of two candles which last night were burning before the image of San Antonio. To-morrow night they were to have burnt themselves out before the image of San Lorenzo. Mark, wretched man, what you have done."

The schoolmaster looked volumes at the barber, who shrank aghast into the shadow of the door and held his peace.

The company then turned expectantly towards the priest, who smoked for two or three minutes without speaking, and, regaining his composure, spoke thus—

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"The question that I have to put before you for discussion is this. At what age may a young man be said to have reached '*years of discretion*'?"

A sigh went round the company. The mayor shook his head and slapped his knee, the notary pursed his lips, the schoolmaster looked reflective, and the blacksmith, touching the cobbler upon the arm, begged the loan of his tobacco-box to make a cigarette.

A slight breeze blowing in made the candles flicker, and catching the priest's bald head—for he was perspiring and had taken off his hat—he sneezed violently once or twice.

"¡Jesús, María, y José!" cried the company in chorus, thus frightening away the devil.

"Thanks, friends!" said the priest, wiping his nose.

The schoolmaster pressed his finger-tips together and put his head on one side.

"In order," said he, "that we may ascertain what is the '*age of discretion*,' we must first assure ourselves of the meaning of '*discretion*.'"

The mayor and the notary each made a gesture of assent.

"Ah! What *is* discretion?" asked the blacksmith, shaking his head at the cobbler's tobacco as he rolled his cigarette.

"What *is* discretion?" continued the schoolmaster. "That is the point, and a very knotty point it is. Let us deal with the enemy strategically. Let us go round about him."

He paused to think a moment, looked up at the ceiling and down again, then, waving his hand towards the mayor—

"With what," he demanded, "would you judge the guilt or innocence of a prisoner?"

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"With what?" returned the alcalde with conscious pride; "why, 'tis a knack that comes to one. A man is brought before you for passing base coin, swears by all the saints in heaven that he never handled it, looks red in the face, his hand trembles. Guilty!"

"A man is brought before you for picking pockets, dares not to utter you a word, stands stock-still and stares at you, ashen as a ghost. Guilty!"

"A man is brought before you for forgery. 'Sign me this,' you say, tossing him a paper (no matter what). 'I cannot,' says he, all gasping. Guilty!"

"Or, maybe he falls into the trap, puts pen to paper and shows that he can write, so proving clearly——"

"But the priest and I are forgers then?" cried the schoolmaster, interrupting him.

"Why so, friend?"

"We both know how to write."

"Aye!" returned the alcalde, with the knowing smile of one who sees clearly another's stumbling-block, "but I know *you* wouldn't forge."

The schoolmaster coughed, and returning to the main issue said—

"The conclusion you come to in each and every case springs from a certain quality that you possess—discretion."

"¡Jesús!" exclaimed the alcalde, "so it does."

And everybody looked astonished at this simple discovery, saving the cobbler, who could not hear, and the barber, who had fallen asleep. The latter was sitting in the doorway just under the eaves, where the lizards were scampering to and fro.

"Wait a minute," continued the schoolmaster triumphantly, shaking his forefinger at them and

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warming to his subject, "we have only just begun. We have only cited one little instance of the quality known as discretion, which—all unsuspected—is an essential factor in every action of our lives. With what—to take a primitive application—with what does a man sweeten his coffee?"

"With sugar," said every one but the priest, who smoked on placidly and eyed the schoolmaster with his lids half-closed together.

"Yes and no," resumed the schoolmaster. "'Yes,' because sugar is a necessary element in the process; 'no,' because sugar is only half the battle. For the proper sweetening of my coffee, gentlemen, I need a mixture of sugar and *discretion*."

"So you do," said the alcalde, looking round.

"Discretion," continued the schoolmaster, "is the mother of all virtue. It is the salt which is necessary in every counsel, and even wit, without discretion, is a sword in the hands of a fool. The mighty of the land have need of it, for the discreet man measures his will against his power. A certain Roman courtier used to say that in order to be discreet a man must have passed through three experiences: first, he must have been in love and jilted; second, he must have had a difficult lawsuit; third, he must have had a quarrel with a valiant man."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the alcalde, rubbing his hands. "No wonder I am so discreet. Yet these conditions cannot apply to our reverend priest."

The priest, thus taken by surprise, bowed with some little confusion, raised his great eyebrows, and smiled.

"All things are possible with the consent of God," said he. "And, alas! your poor shepherd has known all three of these conditions, and come off worst in all."

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But you interrupt our worthy scholar, who was dissecting this matter with no little skill. Heed him well, for even as there is no good pottage without bacon, and no good sermon without Saint Augustin, so there is no good argument without a schoolmaster."

The schoolmaster bowed in his turn, and, flourishing his arm, resumed—

"Moreover, our alcalde should know that even had a priest no experience of his own, such a deluge thereof is poured into his ear at the confessional that he makes early acquaintance with the three '*muches*' which ruin brave men and pretty women, to wit: To talk *much* and know little, to spend *much* and have little, and to presume *much* and be of little worth."

The alcalde winced and shrugged his shoulders.

"*"In dry breeches one cannot fish for trout,"*" laughed the notary.

"Nay!" said the schoolmaster, holding up his finger, "I speak to all in general, but I wish it not to be said of me, '*His comrades liked him but poorly, because he told them the truth.*' And, after all, a man cannot be a *very* great fool unless he know Latin. But, to arrive at a conclusion, let us take one or two instances of discretion.

"You meet a friend whose brother was hanged only yesterday. You speak to that friend of the sun, moon and stars, of the weather, the war, the earthquakes, the corn, the vines, aye! anything, except—*ropes!* What is this? Discretion!

"Passing a neighbour's window you notice that a stranger is secretly whispering with his wife. You pretend not to have noticed it. Discretion!

"You look up at the sky and perceive it overcast with clouds. You——"

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"Stop!" cried the blacksmith, flinging off his cap. Then, when they all turned round to look at him, he vigorously scratched his head.

"Whilst I remember it," said he, "it flashed across me that discretion is nearly always a—a——"

"What?"

"Why—not so much a *doing* of anything, but always a *not* doing of something else."

The priest and the schoolmaster smiled and looked at one another. At length the former spoke—

"In the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom! The blacksmith has hit upon a quality of discretion which, for my part, seems to distinguish it from all other forms of wisdom."

"Aye!" rejoined the schoolmaster, "you speak the truth. Discretion, more often than not, is the holding oneself from temptation to do or speak a foolish thing! There be sins of commission and sins of omission. Now, *to omit a commission* of this sort, is it not a good deed in itself?"

"Of course," cried everybody, even more puzzled than the schoolmaster himself as to where this argument would land them.

"And it is discretion. But *to commit an omission*, why, there—I think——"

The schoolmaster smiled and looked round at them, fondling his chin.

"Better still!" blurted out the alcalde.

"Nay!" said the priest, frowning, and shaking his great forefinger at the alcalde, "*to commit an omission* is a foul fault."

"Aye! So it is!" said the alcalde, shaking his head, and casting down his eyes at the remembrance of certain tithes that were only twentieths.

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The schoolmaster cleared his throat, and, majestically waving his right arm, had already opened his mouth to speak, when one of the candles went out with this gust of coming eloquence.

He turned his head to look at it and meanwhile the priest spoke thus—

"These things I partly knew already. Discretion, in a way, is modesty. What says our alcalde? Discretion, moreover, controls one's actions and restrains one from doing wrong. Which again is nothing more nor less than the principle already discussed of 'one pin for your purse and two for your mouth.' For a fool is as soon shut of his money as his opinions, but with this difference, that money may sometimes be recovered, whereas an ill word is a bolt that nobody can regain, and there is no cure for it. Discreet men have their mouths in their hearts, fools their hearts in their mouths."

"Aye," said the blacksmith, "he who said nothing had the better of it, and had what he desired."

"Still, gentlemen," continued the priest, "I confess that I hardly yet see any clear definition of what is an 'age of discretion.'"

The schoolmaster sighed, and, looking up thoughtfully at the dark ceiling across whose chestnut beams the lizards were disporting, plunged his right hand into the recesses of his pocket.

Eventually he pulled out a dog-eared book, whose scarred leather binding threatened to break asunder in half a dozen places.

"This," said he, "is a Latin dictionary, and for years it has been my daily friend and comforter, nay, even my weapon and defender. Its properties as an oracle are not less marked than its powers as a pro-

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jectile. I have found it a far-reaching argument with the young and with the old. Let us see if it serves us on the present occasion."

With that he drew near to the candle, and, thoughtfully turning over the pages, at last pressed his finger upon a certain passage in the book and frowned attentively. The priest strode across the shop and stood looking over his shoulder.

"Making allowances," said the schoolmaster, "for the patch which covers the letters S—E—P—(for there never yet was treacle in my house but the children took to reading all my books and playing on my flute)—you will see that discretion is—

'A separating; a parting; a dividing.'

"Ha!" said the priest, "you are right."

And a light seemed to dawn upon him.

"This," he continued, "is almost like a supernatural sign. It is a most clear indication. 'A separating, a parting, a dividing.' Lord! Why, it could not well be clearer."

"I do not follow you," said the schoolmaster.

"A certain person who has at last 'separated, parted, and divided' himself from a certain sect or company. Why, man, it could not be clearer!"

The priest enlarged upon this view, and the discussion proceeded upon these lines for some little time, for one of the candles was much longer than the other; but candles, like men, burn out at last. Soon after midnight the barber, waking up with a start (for a clammy cold lizard had fallen down his back), saw half a dozen great patches of saliva upon his doorstep, and, shuffling into his shop with many yawns and sneezes, shook his head mournfully, saying to himself, "If only there lay as many hairs upon my floor as wise and witty sayings

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I were a rich man. Lord! Lord! To think that here have I been shaving chins and clipping pates without any discretion at all for twenty years! Talking for a good hour all about the virtue of not opening their mouths, and discreetly leaving their payment on the doorstep!"

The barber then shot the bolt, took off certain of his garments, grabbed the lizard with a triumphant chuckle, threw him out of the window, and went to bed.

* * * * *

Meanwhile the priest, the alcalde, and the schoolmaster were sauntering down the village arm-in-arm by the light of the waning moon.

A gentle breeze flapped the drooping leaves of the banana trees down by the beach, and their shadows swam to and fro like ghostly sole and skate, hovering over the sleeping donkeys that lay at the fishermen's doors.

The three companions had not even yet exhausted their subject.

"The greatest use of discretion, however," the schoolmaster was saying, "is to know when to be contented, and to enjoy what little one has while the fool is hunting for more."

"However little it may be," said the priest sadly.

"Even though it be only a little moonshine," sighed the schoolmaster.

"And there is much virtue in moonshine," said the priest, "for it costs nothing and saves one many a candle. But who comes here?"

"Why, it is our fisher-boy," said the schoolmaster.

"And waving his hand to Don Pedro," added the priest.

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"He sits well in the saddle," said the alcalde, "and what a fine figure of a man! He would make a brave dragoon."

As Juan came nearer, the priest seemed to give way to some impulse, for he held up his hand to the rider and strode towards him.

It was then that the priest addressed him in the manner referred to in our previous chapter, and Juan, having dismounted with some surprise, followed the good man to his house, tied his horse's rein to the bars of the low window, and, leaving him stamping upon the cobbles, climbed upstairs.

"My son," said the priest, panting somewhat, and with a hand on either knee as the two sat opposite each other in the balcony, "my son, I am fast coming to the conclusion that you have reached an age of discretion."

At this strange remark Juan opened his eyes very wide, and could not suppress a smile.

"An age of discretion!" continued the priest, gradually getting back his breath. "My reasons for thinking so—why, they are neither here nor there; I know what I know, and, praise be to God, I still have the full use of my five senses. That a time would come when you must either find yourself a longer spoon, or go to sup elsewhere, I knew full well. And now to the point. They say you are like to get married very soon?"

"It is not a published fact," replied Juan, laughing; "still, let it pass."

"And matrimony, my son, though it be a holy institution well loved of God, yet here below it is sometimes like a market, where many go for wool and come back shorn. You are one of my flock, and I could have wished to see you seeking a ewe in somewhat cleaner

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pastures ; still God's will be done, and perhaps she has time to mend. But I will not go round about with you, I am an old ox, and the older the ox the straighter the furrow."

"Aye ! That's very true," said Juan patiently.

"Not but what I was going to have added," said the priest, "that the linnet who kept company with the crows, in time began to caw ; but I see that you do not follow me, and indeed I am the last one to put my nose into other people's business."

The priest, thus reminded of his nose, filled it with snuff, and sneezed so heartily that his bald head fell below the level of his elbows which pointed upwards, this giving one the idea of a mosque with two minarets, the shining silver dome lying in between.

"And now," said he, recovering, "we will go straight to the point, for where there's a king's highway an honest man never takes the bye-path. When your mother died (and these lips prayed her out of purgatory, without ever asking this hand who paid the reckoning) she left in my keeping a sealed casket."

The priest rubbed his hands on his knees and looked hard at Juan for signs of curiosity, nor was he disappointed.

"A sealed casket !" repeated the priest. "To be given to you when you reached 'an age of discretion.'"

"Where is it ?" asked Juan.

"The discretion," sighed the priest, "is, alas ! invisible, but I trust that it lies inside you. As for the casket, it is here."

With that he rose from his chair and lighted a dismal oil lamp, for the moonshine at that hour was upon the opposite balconies and the only light was reflected from the whitewashed house fronts.

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He then went to a corner cupboard, one of the few pieces of furniture in the poor room, took out a casket which he looked at lingeringly, as though almost grudging to yield the dear mystery of many years, and came towards the balcony with the casket in his arms.

From the darkened balcony of the alcalde's house alongside, a pair of inquisitive eyes were watching these proceedings, for that place in the alcalde's cranium where should have dwelt intelligence was given over to curiosity. The priest, however, looking from the light into the dark, could not see the alcalde, neither could Juan.

"Since you are to be married so soon," said the priest, "whatever secret this box contains, you had better know beforehand."

He then gave the casket to Juan and sat down beside him, folding his arms.

Juan looked at the casket awhile with emotion and curiosity, then, took out his knife, broke the seal and wrenched open the lid.

First he lifted out a ball of crumpled paper weighing somewhat heavily. When it came undone, out rolled an ounce of gold. The priest looked at the fallen paper and comprehended that the woman had muffled it thus in order that it might not rattle and awake his cupidity.

He smiled somewhat bitterly.

Then Juan took out a small ebony crucifix which he turned round and round and examined with close attention. He handed it to the priest, who was already eyeing the golden ounce and holding it to the light, wondering how the poor wretch could have managed to save it, and how she could have resisted spending it on bare necessities of life.

Lastly Juan took a folded letter from the bottom of

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the casket, opened it, pored over it, read it from end to end, looked at the priest with a puzzled frown on his forehead, back at the letter and read it all through again.

The strange part about it was that the more Juan read it, the more puzzled grew his expression.

The priest became deeply interested. He leant forward in his chair with his hand half extended in anticipation of the moment when Juan should pass him the document. This slight movement recalled Juan's thoughts. He looked at the priest for a moment, half-reached towards him with the letter, then, with a sudden impulse, drew back his hand.

Finally he folded the letter and placed it in his pocket case.

"This," said he, "appears to be very confidential."

Nothing would persuade Juan to be communicative. He remained with his host what time courtesy demanded, talked of his dead mother, the golden ounce, the crucifix. But each time that they came to the letter he merely grew abstracted.

Las ánimas were sounding when he bade the priest good-bye, and untying his horse from the bars of the window, climbed moodily into his saddle and trotted away in the direction of Santa Fe without ever looking behind him.

"If I were a curious man," muttered the priest, who was leaning over his balcony, "it might vex me to have nursed a secret for nearly twenty years and then to be thus flouted of it, like a man who should lay by a bottle of good wine and one day his servant mistakes it for bad vinegar; but as I am only a poor village priest, I may not even be curious. Therefore, God go with you, young man, though 'tis hard sometimes to say God, when one means otherwise, and the saints bear up your

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horse's feet that he may not stumble and toss you into a ditch, which were a pity; and lest my old tongue stumble in saying my paternoster, I will go to bed this night without my prayers, though, God knows, 'tis the first time in nearly half a century."

CHAPTER XX

Dogberry. "One word more, honest neighbours. I pray you, watch about Signior Leonato's door; for the wedding being there to-morrow, there is a great coil to-night. Adieu : be vigilant, I beseech you."

Much Ado about Nothing.

THE barracks of the Civil Guard had a low archway which led from the highway to the quadrangle at the back. On the right-hand side of this entrance was a sentry-box, behind it the barred window of the guard-room. On the left-hand side was another barred window shaded by an acacia, and this latter window corresponded to the office of the captain on duty.

One afternoon Don Luis González sat cross-legged in a rocking-chair and yawning with all his might, his eyes turning every now and then towards an old clock with long hanging weights, which announced that in fifteen minutes he might expect to be relieved.

He was weary of looking round the room, weary of looking out of the window, but as he must needs do one or the other he lazily watched the by-passers, beating the devil's tattoo upon the arms of the rocking-chair with the sheathed sword that lay across his lap.

Tío Patas had been up in the town with a basket on his arm, and on his way home past the barracks his old ferret eyes saw Don Luis lolling in his rocking-chair.

The old man drew near to the window, and the

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guardsman, with his hands behind his back, came slowly towards him, nodded his head condescendingly and asked—of the world in general—how things progressed.

“¡Aja! Don Luis, we are getting along very well, marvellously well!” said Tío Patas.

“Are we so? Where is Don Jack-a-napes to-day?” The old man grinned and stroked his stubbly chin.

“Where is he not, Don Luis? ¡Caracoles! He has been with my lady all the afternoon, cuddling her down yonder by the pinnacles, helping her up the hill and down the hill, tying up her shoe-strings, leaning over the side of her carriage, and kissing her hand.”

“And that is what you call ‘getting along marvellously well’!” said Don Luis, with a sullen sneer.

“That is where the other man is getting along so well. Now we come to the part where we are flourishing, Don Luis, and thereby hangs a tale.”

The old man put down his basket on the cobbles, drew a red handkerchief out of his hat and wiped his forehead, looked up the street and down the street and leered very knowingly, but allowed the guardsman to chafe himself into a fever of impatience.

“Well?” said Don Luis.

“Well!” repeated Tío Patas, holding his hat extended in his left hand and throwing in the rolled-up handkerchief very plumply with his right, “and where will Don Jack-a-napes be before the moon has waned? Answer me that, my gallant captain!”

Don Luis looked down at him angrily and contemptuously with his hands in his pockets.

“I say,” continued Tío Patas, coming close to the window grating and holding on with both hands, “where *would* he be if I were not here to help you?”

“Well, where would he be?” repeated the other.

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"In my lady's bed-chamber," said Tío Patas after a pause.

The guardsman took a step forward and his hands sprang out of his pockets, his jealous eyes were aflame, he looked as though he were suffocating with anger. Tío Patas drew back from the barred window and cackled gleefully.

"¡Cabrón!" roared the captain, regardless of the sentry who stood within earshot. "Thank the bars that I do not screw your neck. How may an animal such as you either cause or prevent such happenings? Cursed be the day that I so far forgot myself as to speak to you of such things!"

The old man returned to the reja and tried to appear offended. His nose wore an aspect of dignity.

"'Wounds heal up, but ill words canker,' Don Luis. Since when have I deserved such reviling at your hands? Remain with God, and shift for yourself as best you may!"

With that he made towards the basket muttering indignation.

"Stay!" cried the guardsman. "Let me hear you out!"

"There is no need," answered Tío Patas, pausing with the basket on his arm; "I have no taste for spending further money on your business."

"Spending money?"

"'Spending money,' says he," murmured Tío Patas, addressing Heaven with uplifted arm; "and he thinks forsooth that I can keep three serving-maids busy listening for me, and half Cinco Caminos on the watch, and all for love of my handsomeness, save the mark!"

The face of Tío Patas looked so handsome that the captain was half convinced.

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"So," said he, putting his hand in his pocket, and taking out something that rustled, "that is your tale."

"Aye! That is my tale!" replied Tío Patas immoveable as waxwork.

"Take this."

The old man put out his hand and took the note. It acted upon him like the smell of blood upon the panther. In a moment he was hanging on to the reja again all eagerness, and speaking quickly.

"Don Luis, as I hope for mercy, I have sown such seed as might split a rock in twain when it starts to spring."

"How?"

"The Jesuits! I have shown Padre Martinez that our young fisherman is the head and front of the agitation in Sante Fe."

"The devil!"

"I have proved it to him, almost but not quite. The padre was as clay in my fingers, I moulded him and turned him about—so—he! he! he! To-night I will hammer down the rivet. It wants but little. What think you, Don Luis, hey? What think you?"

"If this be true you are Satan himself."

Tío Patas accepted the compliment with great relish, then went on—

"But whatever is to be done must be done quickly, for I have it in my mind that his uncle, the rector, will be back anon."

"Can I do nothing?" asked the guardsman.

"Nothing! Leave it to me!—Stay!"

Tío Patas thought awhile.

"You have not the diplomacy that lies here, young man," said Tío Patas at length, tapping his own forehead with his forefinger and sighing very deeply, "or

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you would not have spoken to me as you did a moment ago." (He fingered the note in his pocket.) "Nevertheless, you may do—something."

Tío Patas made a disparaging gesture and said "something" almost with contempt.

Don Luis glowered at him and swallowed his anger. He felt that the old man, by some chance or other, had hit upon the way, and held his tongue.

"You may do this, my captain," said Tío Patas, in an admonishing tone, looking at the guardsman with his head on one side and his forefinger marking time; "you may convey to Padre Martinez, with great care—mind you, with *greatest* care—and in a careless devilish spirit, that so well becomes you, as who should say 'It matters not a hang,' laughing a saucy laugh and clapping your hand on your hilt and twirling your moustache, you may convey that you know this young man to be a public agitator and a rank Republican."

Don Luis laughed, for he felt a little foolish. To hide his shame he took to condescension, which became him worse still, for he was plainly annoyed, yet afraid to miss the opportunity. So he bit his moustache, and told Tío Patas that he was a mighty cunning fellow, and stood very well in his opinion.

"A thousand thanks!" said Tío Patas with a leer. "And the day you marry Doña Carna, what shall be my reward?"

"A thousand dollars," said Don Luis, and meant it.

With a shrug of the shoulders the old man turned to go. The guardsman looked again at the clock. He was bound for his cousin's tertulia.

At the top of the side road leading down to Carna's house and the sea beyond was a boundary stone worn greasy by beggars and muleteers.

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On this stone sat Tío Patas and leant his chin upon his hand as though to rest awhile. Yet it was strange that his legs should have failed him so near to home.

José Ramos came by with Doña María Lopez upon his arm. Her two daughters followed, tittering to each other, and all of them made towards the house of Carna González.

Juan, who came afterwards, went in the same direction, and so did several others.

Presently a "diavala" drove up. Somebody inside touched the driver upon the arm and the vehicle came to a standstill.

Padre Martinez got down, dismissed the driver, watched him turn round, and swept towards Tío Patas, holding up his gown from the dusty road.

"Good evening, friend!"

"Good evening, padre!" said Tío Patas, rising to his feet and taking off his hat. The Jesuit paused a moment and fixed his eager black eyes upon the old man's face in silence. It was not his custom openly to seek information. But his eyes said a great deal, and, with this advantage, they might never be cited in evidence.

"Last night," said Tío Patas, speaking with his best grace and holding his hat in his hand, "our young Anarchist was in Cinco Caminos. He visited two houses. One was the house of Don Pedro Gutierrez, the Republican agitator, the other the house of the priest."

"How long was he inside the house of Don Pedro?"

"He only sat under the balcony upon his horse."

Tío Patas had looked into the Jesuit's eye and realized that the question had an object. So he played for safety and told the truth.

Padre Martinez knew from other sources that Juan had remained outside.

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"Go on with your story! What happened?"

"Don Pedro smuggled a paper into his hand."

"Ha!"

("With tobacco inside it," thought Tío Patas. But he did not say so.)

"He then went to the house of the village priest. We have incurred the enmity of the priest—he hates us."

"I know it. Go on!"

"From one of the houses alongside they were seen with their heads together, poring over the same paper that Don Pedro had handed from the balcony."

"And you identified this document at a distance, and by candle-light. What eyes, my friend, what eyes!"

"At a distance of six feet this document was identified," said Tío Patas without flinching. "It was noted from the adjacent balcony where lives my friend the alcalde, by the simple process of looking over the young man's shoulder in the lamplight."

"How then was it identified? By its title and superscription? Had the alcalde a telescope, my friend?"

"No, he was not close enough to see the writing. But he saw on the envelope and on the paper a glittering golden mark like this——"

And Tío Patas, not knowing that a fleur-de-lys was called a fleur-de-lys, stooped down and sketched one in the dust with his forefinger.

"This same glittering speck was not so difficult to see from two yards distance, and it was seen upon the letter that Don Pedro Gutierrez handed from his balcony," said Tío Patas, rising and looking into the priest's face with the greatest coolness, for he felt that it was no use lying unless he did it well, and the part of

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his lie that was the truth inspired him with much confidence.

For fully thirty seconds the two men stood gazing into each other's eyes, Tío Patas searching for suspicion, Padre Martinez searching for the truth.

The priest understood that nothing more was forthcoming.

"Your story," said he at length, "sounds very fanciful. I am far from being convinced. Nevertheless—for fear that it contain some grain of truth—this night and henceforth let his every movement be watched. Do you hear me?"

"Aye!" replied Tío Patas.

"And, if you are deceiving me," went on Padre Martinez, "why—it shall not serve for long, and when the truth comes out, my friend——"

With an ominous frown the priest turned round and went upon his way.

Tío Patas watched him with a smile.

Then he raised his arms aloft and addressing the empty air, "Gentlemen," said he, wagging his head, "we are on the way to fame and fortune. Watch me twist these fools around these fingers! 'Little by little the housewife weaves the net.' But when it is woven, gentlemen, when it is woven, the golden harvest that the net brings in! Ah-h-h-h!"

The last sound was something between a rumbling in the throat, a sigh, and a cry of exultation. The old man held his arms downwards and looked hungrily upon his upturned palms, and as he drew them in towards him slowly, quivering, the clawed fingers seemed to him to scoop up a myriad of golden wriggling fish, some of which slipped between his fingers, others leaped over on either side.

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Meanwhile from the open windows of Doña Carna's house came sounds of music and merrymaking.

By the time that Don Luis arrived there were more than twenty people, old and young, in the long reception-room that opened on the patio.

This room was simply furnished. Over the mirrors and the glass cupboard-doors were curtains of rose-coloured muslin to keep the flies and wasps off, and a long fly trap hung from one of the four great beams of black chestnut that supported the yellow ochre ceiling. In the middle of the long wall which faced the two windows stood a harpsichord, memento of Carna's mother. When one propped up the lid one read this inscription in great letters of red and gold—

“Sic transit gloria mundi.”

Above this “piano” were a pair of barbed darts or *banderillas* with the gaudy pink and green paper frills all stained a deep chocolate by blood, the rusty hooks being covered by dry blood and sand. These had been placed on the wall by Don Ramón and were the first pair of *banderillas*, stuck into the fifth bull by Pepe-Hillo on the Holy Friday that he fought at Santa Fe.

Doña Carna, though she disliked the look of them, would not remove what her dead father's hands had fastened there.

Opposite each window was a very gorgeous painting : Abraham going to sacrifice Isaac to the left, Cain slaying Abel on the right.

The Spaniards say of pictures that “A bad Christ needs much blood,” and this applied to both paintings in a marvellous degree.

Between the windows Adam and Eve were being

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turned out of Paradise, and here, again, the flaming fiery sword was a masterpiece which threw the very angel into the shade and made perfect fools of Adam and Eve.

Generally this room smelt of ripe apricots and plums and pears, which odour proceeded from the cupboard and attracted many wasps, but to-night there was a smell of cigarettes and cookery in the air.

Outside in the patio were one or two maids who had come to sit out the evening and see their young mistresses home again. Each wore a white or red blossom in her hair and a simple black shawl around her shoulders, and one of them threw off her shawl and fell to helping María and Conchita in the kitchen. For there were trays to get ready, lemons to slice, coffee to filter, water to boil, pastry to serve and a host of other things to do. Aye, and once or twice the curling tongs were smuggled into the fire and out again for somebody who had ruffled her ringlets, or lost them altogether in the heavy dew. Thus it was that to those outside in the patio the kitchen appeared a kind of purgatory with its three candelas each filled with glowing charcoal, its dim rushlight hanging from the ceiling and three torturing fiends in petticoats, one of them clothed in red, and all of them with red faces, bouncing hither and thither in a way that made Tío Patas cry "Pish!" from sheer annoyance when he slouched contemptuously through the patio and flung through the back door into the stable yard, snapping his fingers over his shoulder at the company when he got outside.

Two servant maids were peeping in at the folding doors of the long reception-room. Against these doors leant two young men who at first had criticised the song that was being sung; then, noticing that one of the two

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maids had a very neat face and a neater figure, they began to make love to her under cover of the music.

"Come away!" said the plainer of the two maids, pulling the pretty one by her sleeve.

"Why?" asked the other, giggling.

"They are chaffing us, can't you see? Come!" and she drew her away across the patio where they joined the group of gossips round the kitchen door.

The song came to an end and was succeeded by much clapping of hands from those who suddenly noticed its cessation and by cries of "¡Bravo!" from those whose hands were filled with cards.

The singer was Don Joaquín Pérez, the poet of Santa Fe, in spectacles; the pianist was Don Guillermo Breba, son of the leading surgeon and with seven years' practice in his father's profession.

After Don Joaquín had finished his song and repeated two verses of an encore, a guessing game was started by the girls who rose in a body and expelled the men into the patio, closing the doors upon them ruthlessly until the plot had been matured.

The older people, however, remained at the far end of the reception room steadily playing *tresillo*.

In the patio Juan found himself leaning against a tree-tub alongside Guillermo Breba the doctor, and Don Luis was standing opposite.

"Do you not notice a peculiar smell of fish?" asked Don Luis, looking hard at Breba.

The doctor first stared at him vacantly, then looked annoyed, for he suddenly understood the allusion to Juan's early history. Juan for his part was all innocent of this double meaning, and moved his head about to detect the smell and to find out whence it came.

The upper lip of Don Luis curled and he smiled at

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Juan's face. Juan caught his eye, realized its hostility, and stared at him coolly and disdainfully until he turned away.

Ever since the Eve of St. John each had been aware that the other was his rival, and the two men hated one another by instinct, but with this difference. Juan felt a contemptuous dislike for this flouted lover, who boasted so freely that he once had been in favour, and watched him carefully as a passionate lover watches any and every source of danger, be his lady-love Dame Constancy herself. Luis, on the other hand, was consumed by a smouldering fire of wrath which only lacked a little fanning to spring up into a great roaring flame of vengeance. Why was *he*, Don Luis González, captain of Civil Guards, in a handsome uniform and with medals and crosses, irresistible conqueror of palpitating hearts in far Manila, to come home to his old love with six more years of manliness upon him, only to be treated as naught? Old love, wounded pride, passionate admiration, these are constituents that make Andaluz blood boil over, and Don Luis, out in Manila, had been a man of extreme measures.

And so there he stood against the tub of an orange-bush, with folded arms, biting his nails and looking from under his black eyebrows at the cool unflinching face of the Vizcaíno whose towering frame caused him not one jot of apprehension.

The gentlemen of the party had solaced themselves for their expulsion by lighting cigarettes. One or two of the younger ones were hanging round the kitchen and another peeped inside; there was a sound of scuffling and giggling; somebody cried "Loose me!" and somebody else, "I won't!" Then rose the sound of a loud smack of palm on cheek, the servant maids

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who were looking out at the garden came running in, and Don Joaquín Pérez the poet came running out, holding his face in one hand and his spectacles in the other, and cursing the unhappy moment that he ever tried to kiss Conchita in the shadow of the kitchen door.

Meanwhile his fellow-marauders had come off somewhat better, for each was stuffing some plunder into his cheeks when four indignant wenches bundled them out and slammed the door. These events caused loud applause among the loiterers in the patio, and many witty suggestions to Joaquín Pérez as to the subject for his next poem.

The door of the reception-room opened and one or two of the girls peeped out curiously to find the cause of this disturbance; six or eight of the bystanders cheered and made a rush towards the door; the girls hurriedly banged it to again with a scream and the conspiracy proceeded as before.

Juan, José Ramos, Guillermo Breba, Joaquín Pérez, and Don Luis formed a little group in the patio. They were talking of Carrasco.

José : " And the reasons why you cannot catch him, my captain, are many."

Don Luis : " I perceive that you are able to assist me."

José : " Pish ! Not at all. The people sympathize with him. That is one of the reasons. What can the Civil Guards do alone against an active foe like Carrasco and his fifty bandits, with all the peasantry of Andalucía for passive supporters ? "

Don Luis : " We shall see, my friend."

José : " Bah ! You'll never do any good until the people leave off helping him. And whilst he is so good to them, standing godfather at a woodcutter's christening as he did in Villaperrilla, finding a girl her dowry as

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he did for the sexton's daughter of Peñareal, he is a very king. A poor man falls into debt and your rich landlord embargoes his house, the Guardia Civil back him up. One fine morning the embargo is quietly paid off. By whom? *Carrasco*! Why bless me, Señores, news like that spreads over a province in a twinkling."

Don Luis: "You seem enthusiastic, friend!"

José: "So I am. So would you be if you weren't a Civil Guard, for I take you to be a good Andaluz. Perhaps you'll be a good bandit some day——"

Don Luis: "Señor——"

José: "I mean what I say! Who made the best Chief of Police the Government ever had? Why, José María, the most famous bandit that ever lived, when the Government gave up in sheer despair and offered him command of the brigand hunters."

Guillermo Breba: "Ah, that is true enough, captain. And he met his death in the hills, trying to capture two of his old comrades who refused to change sides."

Joaquín Pérez: "¡Jesús! It must have been a pretty sight when José María and half his bandits came riding into town. The troops might have shot them all."

José: "Pish! Talk sense, man! The Government knew a trick worth two of that! The best bargain they ever struck! No, no, they kept good faith, and as for José María—the very soul of honour, gentlemen."

Don Luis: "Ha! ha! ha!"

José: "Think you there is no honour among thieves? Why, José María didn't call himself a thief. He was chief of a province, and levied fair tribute, and kindly tell me, Señores, in what was he wrong? My opinion is that that's the way *all* kings began."

Guillermo Breba: "Well, *Carrasco's* much the same,

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with his 'safe passports through my territory' and his monthly payments from the company who own the diligence."

José : "Every mayor in Andalucía is in his pay, and even some Government officials."

Don Luis : "Can you give me their names ?"

José : "Aye, that I can, if you'll run home for my pocket-book that's fallen down the well."

Guillermo Breba : Well, for my own part I am an admirer of law and order. Things are coming to such a pass, it makes a good Spaniard blush."

José : "Pish !"

Guillermo Breba : "Look at what happened last Friday. The Civil Governor of Santa Fe coming out of the Aduana at midnight, a man in a cloak touches him on the arm just as he is climbing into his coach, and asks to speak with him aside. 'What do you want, friend ?' says the Governor. 'Is there not a reward of 100 ounces offered for the head of one Carrasco ?' asks the stranger. 'To be sure !' says the Governor. 'And can you tell me where to find him, friend ?' 'Under this cloak, your Excellency !' says Carrasco, and, lifting his hand, flicks the Governor's hat off with his thumb and walks away. Is not this a living scandal ? What can the French and English think of us ?"

José : "But the French and English—live in France and England."

Juan : "As who should say they live in another planet."

José : "'Tis much the same."

The gentlemen were now admitted one by one. Loud peals of laughter told to the listeners outside how each victim was floundering through his task.

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Juan was the last to enter. When the game was over he sat down to play *tresillo* at one of the card tables with Padre Martinez and Doña Felipa in obedience to a word from Carna.

"And how goes the good cause?" asked Padre Martinez, with much apparent good humour as the cards went round.

"What 'good cause,' father?"

"The Republican cause, to be sure, and the Protestant Mission, and all that! Doña Felipa, it is your turn, I fancy."

"The Republican cause!" said Juan, laying down his cards in surprise; "I know nothing of such a cause. I know Republicans, many of them, but am I therefore a Republican?"

Padre Martinez bent forward, raised his eyebrows and smiled mechanically, but without looking up from the cards.

"We are waiting for you, Señor Nieto."

Juan took up his cards and played, but he felt annoyed. However, he repeated his denial of all Republican ideas, which caused Padre Martinez to look at him facetiously, and presently Juan took out his pocket-case to mark the score.

Now when he did this he abstractedly placed the case on the card table by his side and fell to pondering once more, his forehead knit in a frown.

Then Carna came to the table, begged them to excuse Juan for a moment and beckoned him after her into the patio; he followed her into the orchard, and in the shadows of the orchard she took his arm.

From the other side of the house came the distant strains of the piano and the voices of Don Joaquín and Concha Lopez, who were singing "Il bailen del suo

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sorriso," and whether by reason of the distance, or the loveliness and perfume of the night and the sleepy accompaniment of the waves upon the shingle, the lovers felt too happy to do anything but squeeze each other's hands and look mighty tender.

Presently Juan unbent his arm to slip it round her waist and stooped to kissed her.

The kiss was so prolonged that "Il bailen del suo sorriso" (which had already begun another verse when their lips first met together) had reached that long flourish of twenty-six grace notes before they parted, and Concha had scarcely sent the last clear note of her *crescendo* thrilling through the patio and out into the garden when the lovers held each other by the hands and gazed all laughing and love-stricken into each other's tell-tale eyes. And what eyes were Carna's, with those lashes, in the moonlight! She heaved a long sigh and sat down upon a rustic chair.

"The hour has come for our secret to have an ending," said Juan.

"Do you think, after all, that it *is* such a secret?" asked Carna.

"If not, it is your fault!" laughed Juan.

"Or is it yours?"

Tremendous applause in the distance and loud cries of "Encore!" from some one who had been in France. The pianist played the prelude over again and "Il bailen del suo sorriso" commenced afresh.

"Why," said Juan, "does Padre Martinez insist that I am a Republican? Who has put that into his head?"

Carna thought for a moment, then she looked up suddenly and said, "My cousin!"

"Ah!" said Juan, "I might have guessed it. This snake wants scotching."

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"Have as little to do with Luis as possible," replied Carna, "he is a firebrand."

"What is that?" cried Juan suddenly, turning to look round.

"What? I heard nothing!"

"The sound of a footfall, as though we were being watched."

Juan peered behind every bush and corner, but could see nothing.

"I can only hear the owl," said Carna presently.

"Aye! What an ugly voice he has!" said Juan.

"Yet the owl was the greatest songster of them all, his voice surpassed the thrush and nightingale as honey surpasses treacle."

"I do not understand you, pretty sweetheart," laughed Juan.

"The owl," said Carna, coming closer to him and looking up into his face, "was a famous singer among the birds, but he was the bird that sat by the cross when they crucified our Lord. And since that day he cannot sing a note, he only goes 'Cruz! Cruz!'"¹

Juan looked down at her attentively and with reverence as she turned to pluck a flower. There were no pretentious flowers here such as the Jesuits had, and very little garden, only a few old-fashioned favourites, sunflowers, convolvulus and scarlet pacífico. Carna's cut flowers all came from the college. But the orange trees were in their second bloom, as often happens in Santa Fe, and these, with the fig-trees and the vine that flanked the courtyard, seemed very sweet to Juan and Carna to-night.

"Come!" said Juan at last.

And reaching down a branch, he plucked a sprig of orange blossom and placed it in Carna's hair.

¹ "Cross! Cross!"

CHAPTER XXI

"My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!
Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
That I must love a loathéd enemy."

Romeo and Juliet.

WHEN Juan followed Carna from the card-table he left his letter-case behind him and close to Doña Felipa. There were several folded papers in it, and as the case lay open the letters came poking out one above the other.

Padre Martinez looked across at them, as he did at everything, eagerly.

And the longer Padre Martinez fixed his black eyes upon these letters, the larger did his pupils seem to grow.

"Doña Felipa."

"I am all attention."

"Drop your cards near that letter-case, so!"

The old woman did as she was bidden.

"Now, whilst I go on sorting my cards, Señora, you are going to gather up your own again, eh? And when you have gathered them up, the letter-case will lie open, and that letter with the little gold mark in one corner will be disclosed—so!"

When Doña Felipa had gathered up her cards, the letter was full in view.

"Ha! Excellent, Señora, excellent. Now pray

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remember our time is limited. Nevertheless, look carelessly at your cards and sort them over, just as I do mine. I perceive you have left the letter upside down for me. No matter! Now you are going to tell me all about it. I hold an excellent hand, King of Copas, Queen of Oro, and—you were saying?"

"At the top of this letter is a Fleur-de-lys!"

"Calm yourself, Señora! Fleur-de-lys, very well. Proceed!"

"And the signature, ¡Dios mío! The signature is that of Her Imperial——"

"Sh! Speak lower!"

The old woman completed her sentence in a whisper.

"Very well," said Padre Martinez, shuffling his cards. "Now you are going to turn the letter so that we may both of us read it, but in such a manner, with your elbow that—in short, we may be watched from the windows. I cover the people who sit behind *you*, you notice the people who sit behind *me*. So! Excellent! It is written with violet ink and upon both sides, but only on one face. Kindly learn your page off by heart; I am already learning mine. If he comes back, push it towards the case again with your elbow."

For some little time the couple sat shuffling their cards and gazing down at the table.

"Have you learnt your page?" asked Padre Martinez at length.

"Yes."

"Ha! Quite so. It is the easier one. Mine had a key to cipher. Yours was only gossip. Each to his department. On my side there is no date."

"Nor on mine."

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The failing of your sex, Señora. Replace the letter!"

Doña Felipa looked around her; Padre Martinez looked behind her. The company were closely interested in the duet. She deftly replaced the letter and closed the case.

Suddenly Padre Martinez looked up at her.

"This marriage, Señora——"

"¿Pues?"

"Must not be."

"¡Dios mío! Who is to prevent it?"

"You are, Señora, *you*!"

"¡Jesús! Here they are coming up the room behind you, taking hands. I have a presentiment. This is the announcement! She has a sprig of orange blossom in her hair, too! They are come to ask your blessing!"

"I must not give it!"

"How can you avoid it?"

"Somehow I must be prevented."

"Who is to prevent you?"

"You are, Señora, *you*!"

"¡Dios mío!"


The Jesuit continued to shuffle his cards very composedly and without looking round.

Juan and Carna came to Padre Martinez, Carna blushing and trembling, Juan very proud and self-possessed.

"Father, this lady has consented to be my wife," he said, and bowed profoundly to the priest.

Carna fell upon her knees beside the Jesuit's chair and bent her head, awaiting his benediction.

There was a general uprising of guests around the room, a sound of exclamations, and then deep silence. The maids stood peeping in at the doorway.



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"Ha!" said Padre Martinez, and rose to his feet, looking down at Carna.

There were those who afterwards averred that Padre Martinez held himself stiff and seemed to refuse his blessing; there were those who thought they saw him hesitate; there were those who maintained that his hands were all but spread upon the graceful bowed head before him, but the truth will never be known.

For at that moment Doña Felipa uttered the most piercing scream that human ear had ever hearkened to in Santa Fe, not excepting those ancient days when Autos de Fe were held in the market place, and, falling from where she sat behind the table, she disappeared from view of the horror-stricken spectators, and swooned right away upon the floor as flat as a pancake, or as nearly so as Nature would permit. The first to recover from his astonishment was Padre Martinez.

"Quick, bring a salts bottle!" he called to the maids. "Perhaps it is only a slight attack. Though now I think of it, this lady has looked strangely pale throughout the evening. Has nobody noticed it?"

Of course they had!

Ten people rushed out of the room to bring the salts bottle, and fell over each other in the doorway. The young doctor and several others moved the card-table aside, and discovered Doña Felipa, eyes closed, heels together, and arms lying wide apart. All eyes followed Guillermo Breba as he knelt beside the prostrate lady and took her wrist in one hand, placing his other hand upon her left side.

It is not known whether the motion of Doña Felipa's heart had sunk to one beat per minute, but certain it is that Don Guillermo kept the bystanders in suspense

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for nearly sixty seconds before pronouncing that life as yet was not extinct.

"¡Dios mío!" cried all the ladies.

"What ails her?" demanded the gentlemen.

The doctor shook his head. This was taken by some to mean that the symptoms were very grave, but it might even have meant that Don Guillermo did not know. At last he spoke.

"I pray you," said he, "bring me a basin. Fortunately I have my lancet with me. This good lady is too full of blood, of that I am convinced."

Several rushed out for a basin, and nearly collided with others who were bringing in the salts' bottle. At this very moment Doña Felipa opened her eyes.

"I am better now," she said in a very faint voice. Smelling salts were administered to the nose, cold handkerchiefs to the forehead.

"What was it?" asked several of the ladies eagerly.

"Oh, that face, that dreadful face!" cried Doña Felipa, almost with a scream and with symptoms of swooning once again.

"What face? Where?"

"In the window! There!"

Everybody looked towards the window with distended eyes, and the concentrated gaze of more than twenty people fell upon Tío Patas, who was looking in from the garden very much surprised, and dimly visible in the shadow of a palm tree. The girls made a rush towards him, and demanded to know what he wanted, "looking in at windows suddenly with a face like that, and very nearly causing a sweet lady to die an untimely death!"

When Tío Patas, all gasping with fury, realized

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that this was being said to him in earnest, he so lost control of himself that the ladies put their fingers in their ears and Don Luis slammed the windows to, leaving him mowing and gesticulating through the glass at them.

What with this, and with Doña Felipa being helped out of the room in a half fainting condition and insisting upon Carna's going with her to comfort her, the lovers and their betrothal were quite forgotten for the time being.

The *tertulia* was forthwith broken up.

Juan found a moment to say to Carna apart—

"I shall wait beneath your balcony until they all have left. Will you come there to say good-night to me, sweetheart?"

"Yes. Go and wait," she whispered.

José Ramos, arm in arm with Joaquín Pérez, went up the road towards a wayside tavern along the highway, for little mischievous José had found there was great promise of amusement in a poet who was also half a rake. Besides, he knew a rhyme or two himself.

The last two people to leave the house were Don Luis and Padre Martinez. Each had his purpose; each hoped the other would go first.

Doña Felipa, as soon as she heard that all but these two had departed, revived most hopefully, and even sat out in the patio fanning herself and taking sips of water.

At last the guardsman turned to go.

"See me to the door, cousin!" he said in an undertone pleadingly to Carna.

She went with him reluctantly. When they reached the porch he begged her to come outside, looked all around him, and—

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"Cousin, I have a word or two to speak with you," said he.

"Say on," replied Carna impatiently, and making a slight grimace.

"When one marries, 'tis to make or mar oneself."

"¿Pues?"

"And you are about—to mar yourself."

"Cousin Luis, my father used to say, 'Never contradict a fool,' and I will not contradict you."

"Oh, that he were alive at this moment, to see his only daughter wedded to a fisher-boy, a *charrán*!"

"Luis, if you have nothing better to say, I will bid you good-night and go in. For mad words I have only deaf ears."

"How impatient you are with me, and how bitter!"

"You have squeezed the orange too far. Now comes the bitter part."

"Stay!" said the captain, making a step forward in the shadow of the porch, and looking at her eagerly.

"I have more to say to you."

"I pray you be brief, then."

"Honey is not for an ass's mouth. Nay, nay!—come! I have done with your *charrán*; I will say no more of him. Turn back, pretty cousin!"

She looked at him where he stood, with the moonlight filtering down through the foliage, lighting gay patches of his uniform and glittering sword-hilt, and falling on his face. An eager passion was rising in his eyes, and she took one step away from him.

"For the sake of bygone days and bygone love," he said, "wait but one month, little cousin, before you take the *dichos*, before you acknowledge your betrothal to this man. Carna! have pity on me! In six years I have known sixty passions, yet all their

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strength combined may not equal the devouring love I feel for you. Alas! you can twist me round your fingers, little one, and bid me kiss your shoes, make me cut any capers that you list. Oh, cousin! cousin!"

Don Luis moved nearer to her, and a lump seemed to rise in his throat and choke his utterance. His fists were tightly clenched.

He bent closer to her, and whispered passionately in her ear, seizing her little wrist with a grip that made her wince.

"Blessed be the mother that bore thee, the sun that shines upon thee, the air that breathes upon thee! Blessed be the ground that thou treadest, the pillow where thou liest——"

She wrenched away her hand and moved back towards the doorstep.

"Nay!" he cried bitterly, "I will 'thou' thee no more. I must leave that to another, cousin, eh? Stay! Bid me good-night like a friend; do not scurry away as though I had tried to murder you. Am I a toad?"

"Indeed, no!" said Carna, almost in tears. "And believe me, cousin, I think very well of you. But what may not be, may not be. And, alas! I can say no more!"

He took her hand, controlling himself and trying to seem merely courteous. For some moments he gazed into her eyes, until she made a movement of embarrassment, then loosing her hand, he fell upon one knee beside the doorstep, and would have kissed her shoe, but when she drew away he kissed the ground where she had rested it.

Then, half rising—

"Cousin," said he, "before your wedding day you

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may weary of this new-comer. Mark me well! And if this come to pass, you have but to do one thing."

Carna drew herself up, and looked upon him coldly.

"Do you know what it is? Nay, but I will tell you! The old love signal, cousin, when you and I were sweethearts. Hang your shawl of Manila over your balcony, and within the hour, aye, within the same moment, I am with you to worship and protect. Till then, before God, I will not come again! Hear you that, cousin? My foot shall never cross your threshold any more unless you bid me!"

He rose and stood before her.

Carna's pretty face grew bitter with a sneer as she turned to go inside, calling to him over her shoulder—

"As you will, cousin! Come when I hang your shawl over my balcony! Go with God!"

"With God!" replied the guardsman, and strode moodily away.

When Don Luis reached the highway he heard a footstep behind him, and, turning, recognised Juan, who came towards him with such evident intention that the captain could scarcely pretend that he had not seen him.

"A word in your ear, friend captain!" said Juan, who was smoking a cigarette and trying to speak calmly.

"I am here, Señor," replied Luis, "and whilst I remain, my right ear is at your service to take in all you say. For my left ear, I shall leave it uncorked also, but that has another purpose."

"As you will! Standing by the corner of my sweetheart's house——"

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"Of *whose* house?"

"My sweetheart's and your cousin's—I happened to see you catch her by the wrist."

"Ah! And you are not ashamed, Señor?"

"Of what?"

"To confess that you were eavesdropping?"

"Think what you will. What I wished to tell you, Don Luis, is this. Be you Captain of Civil Guards or Commander-in-Chief of all the forces, had you not released that lady on the instant, I would have shaken the breath out of you, and if I see you take such a liberty again, I will hold you by the collar with one hand and bang your bones soundly with the other ¿Estamos?"

The guardsman's fury knew no bounds. To increase his rage, the tall Vizcaino's arm, lightly brushing against his sleeve, looked fully capable of carrying out this threat.

"You will not do that, friend fisherman!"

Juan looked down steadily into his face with a provoking contemptuous smile.

"You will not do that," repeated Don Luis, "and for two good reasons. First, my friend, because no one shall 'batter my bones' unless it be the sexton, and 'tis a longer march from your threat to its fulfilment than it is from here to the cemetery. Secondly, because I do not play at pommelling."

He looked meaningly into Juan's unflinching face, and his eyes were like coals of fire.

"When I settle accounts," continued Don Luis slowly and hoarsely, "I sign them with red ink, my friend. And you remind me of just such another Jack-a-napes as yourself, who made very similar remarks to me in Manila. I killed him one morning

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with a little turn of the wrist I have, so—¡zas!—before breakfast.”

The captain, without taking his eyes off Juan, gave an over-hand turn to his wrist, as a swordsman who rapidly shifts his point from guard to thrust, making a clacking with his lips as he did so.

“Faith, and very prettily done,” said Juan, “but you should not have warned me, Señor! I am amused to see you so much put out; it would seem that your cousin has been none too kind to you.”

“I trust that Doña Carna will come to her senses even yet, and live to laugh at you,” cried the captain. “Women, wind and fortune soon change! Do you know, Señor Don Panperdido, that our grandfather González of Santa Fe was one who stood covered before his sovereign? ¡Caracoles! And now we’re to have *sprats* in our quarterings, and Jesuit sprats, forsooth! No sooner do I turn my back on Santa Fe than in walks Sir Fish with a crucifix under one fin and a bunch of forget-me-nots under the other.”

“Señor, a strong tongue generally goes with a weak hand, but I will not disabuse you of your opinions, for that were to wash the head of an ass. I hear footsteps, and this lady’s good name is too dear to me for lips such as yours to be profaning it along the high-ways.”

The captain’s anger was now beyond control, and the quarrel thus begun had most likely had a serious ending, but at this moment they were suddenly interrupted.

José, coming out of the *ventorrillo* arm in arm with the poet, had felt very merry and little guessed what hot words were being bandied almost within a stone’s throw of where they stood. They had taken two or

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three "swallows" of Manzanilla, and, coming out of the wine shop, paused to quarrel as to who should light the other's cigarette first, then resumed the thread of their conversation and sauntered on along the road, which, at that point, was an avenue with gentlemen's villas lying in stately gardens on either side, and the perfume of *dama de la noche* gently stealing round the wayfarer. Truly a scene in which one would scarcely expect a brawl!

The subject of their argument was the Muse Sentimental as opposed to the Muse Jucose.

José: "Enough of such heavy music! For my part, I am for laughing while I can, for it's more than likely I shall weep to-morrow. I liked that better about

'Your eyes are two suns
And my heart is wax.'

Sing it me again."

Joaquín: "Oh! if you care for serenades now, what better than the quartette?"

José: "Or that about 'May God never give me a purse without plenty, a stew without meat, or a bottle that's empty.'"

Joaquín: "Yes! Quite so! I see you are very fond of the Devil-may-care. Well, a little of it is excellent, but you mustn't put it in everything, like the cook does garlic and tomatoes. As for your drinking songs, they are very well, but they are musty. Now-a-days there is a Renaissance of pure art. Now, for good taste, look at the 'Rhapsody of a Night Owl'—"

José: "Hist! with your 'Night Owls'! what is that going on yonder in the moonlight across the avenue? Listen!"

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Joaquín : "Who are they ?"

José : "The Captain of Civil Guards for one, and Don Juan Nieto for another, and hooting at each other to some purpose."

José and Joaquín stood for a few moments in the shadow cast by the moon from a bushy poplar, then José suddenly touched the poet on the shoulder.

"Come," said he ; "you had better take the captain by the arm and whisper your 'Rhapsody of a Night Owl' in his ear to soothe him. For my own part, I'll hang on to my old comrade the Vizcaíno."

"And quickly," muttered Pérez, crossing over. "For if not, there is going to be bloodshed !"

* * * * *

When Carna went to the porch to bid her cousin good-night, Padre Martinez stood looking down at Doña Felipa.

"You are an artist, Señora, an artist !" the Catalán priest had said to the old woman when they were alone. Then presently—

"Have you smelt the wickedness of it ? Have you seen the devil's ear ?"

"The letter ?"

"Aye, Señora, the letter ! A letter, most weighty and particular, addressed to the 'Father Rector of the College,' containing a secret cipher, with names of dukes and marquises, our friends and allies, whose fathers were Jesuits before them ; a message that our enemies would have risked their necks to capture, and now they have it in their keeping. This, then, is the fountain whence springs this deadly water. Cursed be my over cautiousness ! What was it, again, that was written about the money ?"

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Doña Felipa looked upwards and reflected, then said slowly—

“ ‘The Bishop is yours, the Civil Governor is yours, and one hundred thousand francs. All these you may have before the Day of St. John by merely asking me, but until I have your answer to this note I dare not move.’ ”

“This!” cried the priest, raising his finger and glaring furiously around him to make sure they were alone; “this in itself were proof enough. Who but our deadliest foe would thus prevent assistance and supplies? And they have not come; no, no, they have never come. ‘Before the Day of St. John.’ Why, the Bishop is still our foe, the Civil Governor still opposes us, and as for the money, I know from Padre Mateo exactly what has come in and what has gone out. Therefore, mark me well, Señora, this is no letter that the Rector has received without my knowledge! This is no letter that has been filched from him! This is a letter——. My God, can the old man have told the truth?”

“Who?”

“Tío Patas! Unless he is the Father of Lies himself, this is the same letter that has passed the round of the Republican and Protestant agitators, and was handed to this infamous young man by *Pedro Gutierrez from his balcony*. My God!”

The Catalán priest paused for a while to ponder with folded arms, and in his powerful face and jet-black eyes were such purpose and concentration that Doña Felipa feared to interrupt him.

“This, Señora, must be our plan of action,” he said at length, coming close to the old woman and bending down towards her, “*unceasing watchful-*

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ness. Every word and action must be recorded, his going and coming made a note of, a message in my hands within the hour if anything strange occurs. And whatever ingenuity may devise that is discreet, that do, in order that we may——”

The Jesuit paused and pressed his lips together.

Doña Felipa concluded the sentence for him.

“In order that this marriage may be prevented,”

Padre Martinez smiled grimly.

“Aye! That in the first place.”

“And what else?”

“When one has been stung by a snake in the grass, an atheist, blasphemous, noisome, offensive, deceitful, conspiring snake that one had nourished; an innocent-looking, insidious, poisonous reptile, what should one do, Señora, what should one do?”

“¡Jesús, María y José! He is the Father Rector's own nephew.”

“Aye! And therefore, whatever is to be done, we had best do quickly, spare him the agony of this chastisement, and pity his poor white hairs.”

“How far must we push this matter?”

“How far, Señora, how far? How far may we *not*? ‘If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.’ It is not our own battle that we fight, neither do we seek our own profit; it is the Master's, and I have but repeated to you His very words. Use them according to your lights.”

Doña Felipa made a sign of acquiescence.

“You have but to command!” said she. “The Master's will be done! First, I can see one thing clearly.”

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"What?"

"We must break off this match. The child's money is partly in your control. Could you not——?"

"Bah! A slow way and a clumsy one, Señora, and the *worst* way—with a woman! That the match must be broken off, so far, so good. But you have not yet risen to the situation. What is worse, you have overlooked a fundamental axiom. Pray, would you have her regard me as her enemy?"

"There is only one safe way of breaking off matches," said Doña Felipa presently, as though this process were not new to her. "A lovers' quarrel, *twenty* lovers' quarrels, however skilfully contrived, can be made up again."

Padre Martinez watched the speaker with silent attention.

"This gallant, when he returns," continued Doña Felipa, "must find another lover in his place. That means a final rupture."

"And our 'other lover'?"

"Ready to hand. Luis, her cousin."

"But our daughter scarcely favours him," said the Jesuit drily.

"No, nor ever will do. It cannot be hoped for."

"¿Pues?"

"One cannot think, in five minutes, how such a trap could be contrived. But Zamora was not captured in an hour."

"I begin to see," replied Padre Martinez, "that you are in the right, Señora. One nail drives out another. That, evidently, is our plan. We have advanced a step. But this is not a siege of Zamora; our battle must be fought and won within the next

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few hours. Therefore, lose no time; commence from this moment gently to persuade her. Present to her the idea that she must replace this Nieto by her cousin Luis. If she rebels, discretion! If she be weak, push home! But sow the seed, Señora, sow the seed, and leave me to cultivate the seed already sown. At first she will have none of it, but no matter! There is no such thing as an impossibility. This is a case that demands a *tour de force*. Therefore to-morrow, after we have slept over it——”

“Hist!” said Doña Felipa; “here she comes!”

In a moment he had changed his expression, and, turning to Carna with a smile, told her that the invalid was much improved.

Bidding good-night to the ladies very courteously, Padre Martinez turned to go. To Doña Felipa he gave his hand. She kissed it.

To Carna he gave it also, but although she kissed it dutifully, she followed him to the door.

The priest was all smiles and urbanity, talking to his “little daughter” of her *tertulia*, and plying her with graceful compliments.

Yet he seemed in a hurry to be gone.

“The diavala is not here,” said Carna on the doorstep.

“I will find one along the main road, daughter,” he replied.

“Father!——”

“What is it, my child?”

“O father!” cried Carna, falling upon her knees on the step beside him and bursting into tears with an emotion that overcame her, though its origin she scarcely knew. “O father, give me your blessing in my newly found happiness. Did you not hear

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what he said? Place your hands upon my head in the name of the Holy Mother, and in sign of God's consent."

For a moment the priest paused as though in hesitation, looked sternly at the moon, and swept his gaze around the palms and orange trees, piercing the farthest shadows, glanced behind him into the lighted patio, then raised his hands aloft, and with every nerve and sinew trembling, bent over her and said—

"Thy lover is God's own enemy, an atheist, liar and conspirator, the foe of Christ's chosen Company, the Evil One himself come down from the mountains. Shun him as thou wouldst shun hell fire; fear him as thou wouldst fear God's curse; loathe him as thou wouldst loathe a leper that stood in thy path and blasphemed Christ's holy name!"

Without another word Padre Martinez let fall his arms, drew himself up, and, gathering his skirts around him, stepped off into the night, nor paused to look behind him.

On the doorstep knelt Carna, white and immovable, silent and turned to stone.

CHAPTER XXII

"I will not marry yet ; and, when I do, I swear,
It shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate,
Rather than Paris."

Romeo and Juliet.

LONG and pitiful was the scene between Doña Felipa and Carna when she came back into the patio looking like any ghost. When Doña Felipa at length excused herself, saying that she felt too ill to argue longer, Carna was left with her maids, who sat upon the floor around her, having been silent witnesses of the interview.

"So that, Señorita, the priest forbids it ?" asked Susana open-eyed, as soon as Doña Felipa had closed her door.

Carna did not answer. She was leaning forward in a chair, her hands between her knees, her eyes staring at the ground.

"Then what's to be done ?" asked María.

"That 'what's to be done' ?" asked Conchita fiercely and snapping her fingers at the questioner. "Come, let us see, what would *you* do ?"

"But, ¡hija ! If the Jesuits forbid ?"

Conchita sprang to her feet and placed one hand upon her hip, flourishing the other the better to speak her mind.

"Were I plighted to such a sweetheart, neither Padre Martinez nor the Bishop of Santa Fe nor the Pope of Rome himself should come between us.

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God's will is God's will, but it is not the will of the Jesuits."

"Sh!" cried Susana, who was more impressionable. "You chatter of things that you don't understand. It is not a matter of the Jesuits. Don Juan Nieto has made a compact with the Evil One. He is a doomed soul."

"¡Quíá!" snarled Conchita, angrily puckering up her nose and face. "What 'doomed soul' nor 'doomed soul'!"

"Did you not hear? The good father told the Señorita he was the 'Evil One himself come down from the mountains.'"

"Pray God you may go to bed with such another on your wedding night."

"You seem to think it impossible then that Satan could go disguised?" asked Susana.

"Pish!"

"Let me tell you that such things have happened."

"Where?" asked María open-eyed.

"In Frigiliana. Ask them to this day about the stranger that came a-courting with a guitar, and always at the balcony. Seldom they could persuade him to go inside a house, and when he did, he *never took his hat off*."

"Ah-h!" said María.

"And one evening his lady-love reached her arm out through the *reja* and snatched off his hat. And what do you think she saw?"

"Hair!" laughed Conchita.

"Aye, hair! But in amongst it were two little horns. And old Nick flew off in a fury, spitting fire at her, and if you don't believe me, ask them in Frigiliana!"

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"¡Hija! I am sorry for you!" cried Conchita scornfully. "'Tis my opinion the devil has too many fish to fry to have time on his hands for serenading, and when every man that goes whispering at the *reja* is the devil's own assistant, why, what need for Old Wickedness himself to come a-courting? María is surprised at you, and so am I!"

"It seems to me," said María, joining in, "that this wickedness has very suddenly come to light."

"Ah, and so suddenly!" cried Conchita.

"Perhaps the good father is deceived?" said Susana, looking up at her mistress.

Carna seemed to become conscious for the first time that they were speaking to her. She covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

The girls drew near to her.

Susana placed her arm round Carna's waist and kissed her hot cheek; Conchita took her arm and tried to pacify her; María knelt in front of her and looked up at the tears that were dropping between her fingers.

"This comes of priests meddling with women's hearts," cried Conchita angrily.

"¡Ay de mí!" sobbed Carna.

"This house smells somewhat too strongly of Jesuits," said María.

Susana looked up at the closed door of Doña Felipa along the gallery and said "Sh!"

"You must not talk thus to me," said Carna presently, when she could control herself, "though God knows you mean very well."

And soon after she bade them help her upstairs to her chamber, where they undressed her with intervals for sobbing, and put her to bed with many caresses. Soon after they left her, Carna sank into

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a state of unconsciousness that was neither sleeping nor waking. She might have been lying an hour or more in this condition, when it appeared to her that somebody was standing beside her bed.

It was a figure robed in white and crowned with a crown of thorns. From where this black garland of thorns indented the white forehead sprang drops of blood, and in the face was a look of intense reproach, in the eyes a light of jealousy. And a voice said "Choose! Choose between him and Me!" As Carna gradually opened her eyes, the light that suffused this apparition grew dimmer, the figure retreated backwards towards the wall and grew smaller, until at last she seemed to realize that it was the Christ who had come down from the wall and spoken to her.

She rose from her bed and knelt before the crucifix in prayer, then took out the candles and sconces once more and lighted them to appease the image, and when they were flickering on either side, once more it seemed contented.

But only for a little while.

Presently it seemed to be repeating the words that the apparition had spoken by the bedside.

"Choose! Choose between him and Me!"

She tried to lead His mind away from it, glorifying and praising and thanking Him, bowing down to Him and speaking of other things, reminding Him of her devotion ever since she was a child, of her mother's love for Him, of her father's love for Him, of a score of different things that had happened in her young lifetime all tending to prove her love and reverence for Him.

These words she poured out flowingly and without

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a pause, as though she feared an interruption, and when she could think of nothing new, she would tell Him the same things over and over again.

The breeze was stronger to-night, and sometimes made the candles gutter with a blue flame as if they were going out, and in such moments the face of the image seemed to her almost angry, and with every change in the light it took a different expression, now doubting, now melting, now suspicious, jealous, passionate, tempestuous and awful.

For a long time she continued her fervent prayer. Then at last she paused, exhausted.

And again she heard "Choose! Choose between him and Me!"

Then for a moment her passion overcame her; she lost control of herself, raised her arms, and crying—"¡Ea! I have chosen, and 'tis not Thee!" she sprang towards the crucifix and blew out first one candle and then the other.

And when she fell once more upon her knees the darkness and silence were so majestic and so awful that she trembled at what she had done, and knelt staring towards the black crucifix aghast.

Then at last she rose and fled from the room, for there was a wrathful Presence that appalled her, a luminous agonized face with a crown of black thorns that moved towards her through the shadows.

When she flung herself beside the bed of Doña Felipa she was calling for mercy and burying her face in the sheets. Doña Felipa sat up in bed and rested upon one arm astonished.

"I have affronted my Redeemer," sobbed Carna, and this was all she would say.

"Come!" said Doña Felipa, stroking her head

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and soothing her; "you are over-wrought, child. Come, let us tell our beads together."

She got down from the bed and fetched her rosary. The two women knelt side by side.

"Nuestra Señora Santísima——" began Doña Felipa.

Carna turned towards her and flung her arms around her neck.

"Must I forsake my lover?"

"Aye, child!"

"And learn to curse his name?"

"He is an enemy to God. You must try to forget him."

"Tell me where oblivion is on sale, that I may buy me some!"

"He is a doomed soul!"

"And if I wed him I go to hell with him?"

"Yes. Be rid of him at once. There is something terrible about him that I may not tell you."

"Ah!"

"And—for fear he return, for Satan is ever persistent—I would give you some wholesome advice."

"What?"

"Send a message to your cousin."

"Ah! You are a wicked woman! You wicked, wicked woman!"

"Let us pray. Nuestra Señora Santísima, madre cariñosa de Jesús, esposa bien querida de Dios, os rogamos——"

"No! no!" cried Carna hoarsely, "I may not pray."

"Why?"

"I have blasphemed."

"¡María Santísima!"

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"I have insulted the Saviour!"

"I cannot believe it of you!"

"Yes! yes! And I dare not go back to my room."

"Why, child?"

"Because He is waiting inside the door."

"Nay, this is foolery."

"I tell you He is," cried Carna passionately, almost with a scream, and lifted up her arms, clasping her hands behind her head.

Then Doña Felipa saw in the moonlight that her pupils were dilated.

"Come! come!" she said, seizing hold of Carna's wrist. "Let us come together and make sure."

Reluctantly the young girl allowed herself to be led back into her room, holding one hand across her eyes.

"Look!" said Doña Felipa when they stood inside.

Carna slowly uncovered her eyes.

In the embrasure of the window hung the sleeping canary in his cage, around the window frame peeped in the vine leaves and tendrils, gently rustled by the *levante* that floated in from the shore. Framed by this window was a stretch of the Milky Way, and below the Milky Way the horizon where a dim sky met the silvery glistening sea. Beneath this again was a foreground of dusky orchard, and from the orchard rose the hoot of an owl.

Carna stared only towards the crucifix.

"Well?" asked Doña Felipa, looking at her.

"Let Susana sit with me to-night. I cannot sleep."

CHAPTER XXIII

"Thou, thou, my Jesus, wholly me
Didst embrace upon the tree ;
Thou didst bear the nail, the spear,
Bitter shame, and shrinking fear,
Grief's innumerable train,
Bloody sweat and racking pain ;
Yea, and death ; and these for me—
For the sinner against Thee.
Why, then, shouldst not Thou by me,
Jesus, most beloved be ? "

S. WILBERFORCE.

THE Jesuits' Chapel was one of the wonders of Santa Fe. Its exterior was not remarkable, save for the night effect of the great altar window when candles were burning within.

Inside, however, its beauty rivalled the Cartuja at Granada, though its wealth was differently displayed.

The organ in a gallery above the main doors was accessible from the upper corridor of the college. Like everything else in the chapel, it was a monument to patience and persistence.

Opposite to the mystic organ, which towered in the darkness of the gallery, stood the altar, and this indeed was what made the chapel famous.

Three times had it gradually bedecked itself, putting on gold and silver and jasper ; twice had it been wrecked ; and now, ever since the Jesuits' last return

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to Spain, little by little one elaboration had followed another until it reached a magnificence that the good fathers had scarcely dared to hope for.

Indeed, there were more reasons than one why they should never have anticipated such splendour, and in some things it was only the personality of Padre Ignacio that had made the combination possible.

For the rules of the Jesuits are at once rigid and elastic. Rigid as steel till indulgence be obtained, elastic afterwards. Thus the Sacred Congregation of Rites has prohibited altar cloths having the upper side of silk. Yet the silk lining of the chapel altar cloth had climbed round the edge and had so extended itself over the outer surface that a few square inches of linen in the centre were all that remained.

The golden temple, lined with white silk, in which reposed the host, offended no rules at all; but certain trinkets had been criticized by those who were sticklers in such matters.

Above the altar was the stained glass window which, at night, looked black and sombre. At the back of the altar were three panels.

The left-hand panel represented the Nativity at Bethlehem. It was carved out of a hard white wood most beautifully enamelled. The crown of the Madonna was made of real pearls, the staves of the Magi were tipped with gold leaf and amethyst, and the Star in the East, if not of diamonds, was of some brilliant crystal that sparkled most vividly in the light of the surrounding candles.

The right-hand panel showed Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the sleeping disciples, the rabble, headed by Judas, approaching in the distance. Some said that the drops of blood upon the

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Saviour's forehead were rubies, and certain it is that His halo was of pearls, those of the disciples being of silver. The trees in the garden bore golden fruit.

But the great central figure was sublime in its simplicity. In size it was somewhat smaller than the stature of a man, the crown of thorns was worked in simple black ebony wonderfully carved, the nails were of ebony, the cross itself was of jet black oak.

And when I have said this, I have told you well-nigh everything that I can truthfully describe.

For the wondrous carving of the Saviour's body, the dreadful wounds, the inexplicable look upon His face where the drops of blood ran down from the thorns upon His forehead, these are matters that I have gazed and pondered upon, but could never impart to you. Think only of something so awful, so piteous, so lovely and so agonized, that the hand which wrought and painted it can surely be no hand which must turn to dust.

The jewels and ornaments around the altar to right and left, the twisted columns of jasper between the panels, the miracles in fretwork of alabaster beneath it, the golden host, the steps of wax-like marble, the agate candlesticks, each with a lighted candle, the rich paintings on the wall on either side, the mirrors of burnished silver, these I mention but in passing, yet each was marvellous in its beauty and of its kind.

The earlier part of August was an anniversary of great importance in the college.

In the first place, the return of the Jesuits to Santa Fe had taken place on the fifth. On the sixth came the Transfiguration of Our Lord, and on the seventh the "Name of Jesus."

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Then, after an interval of three days, came the feast of San Lorenzo, patron saint of an important parish in Santa Fe and namesake of the Bishop.

It had been the custom, on the day of the Transfiguration, to hold mass both morning and evening, and for several years past Padre Ignacio's presence in the pulpit, the charm of his voice and manner and high intelligence, had attracted a small gathering of outsiders to the chapel on this anniversary.

The sermon, instead of being delivered immediately after the gospel, was reserved for those who chose to stay, which most people did; for to stroll down the hill through Cinco Caminos shortly before bedtime in August, especially when the moon is at the full and the west wind is gently blowing from the orange groves, is a penance passing easy to undergo. To the aged it is more eloquent than the sermon, and tells them of their God; to the young it is a madrigal, and whispers of their love.

The Father Rector being in Sevilla, it fell to the lot of Padre Martinez to preach. The Catalán was kneeling in a dark side seat, not far from the altar, awaiting the conclusion of the mass. The third part of the service had begun.

The officiating priest, making the sign of the cross with the paten, had laid the wafer upon the corporal. On the Epistle side of the altar the deacon was preparing the wine; the sub-deacon was waiting with the water. Three candles burned upon the right hand of the altar, three upon the left, but there were nearly a score of tall silver candlesticks with huge lighted candles close to the altar on either side.

Amongst the congregation were Carna, Doña Felipa, and Susana.

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Once or twice during the service Doña Felipa, leaning towards Carna, had managed to whisper something in her ear. Each time that she did this, her words produced an expression of still deeper distress in the young girl's face. Each time, also, the older woman seemed, with a scarcely perceptible smile, to await some development or reply, her eyes resting upon Carna's face intently, then turning towards the altar.

Slowly, like a tired pendulum, the censer swayed from side to side; up rose the heavy wreathing smoke of exorcised frankincense, smoke whereby every illusion that the Enemy uses to assault the soul and body may be put to flight. The form of the acolyte who swung the censer stood out against the background of candles like some large blot, his robe and features invisible, his outline marked by a dazzling fringe of slender lines, a hoar-frost of golden light. The impenetrable darkness of the chapel seemed to Carna to be listening. Out in that blackness beyond the faintly looming pillars the Enemy himself might be watching, and hearing what was passing yonder at the altar. In the unseen rafters of the roof a myriad of black eyes and ears might be marking every movement of the priest, every whisper of the novices.

Having kissed the altar, the priest turned towards the people, and, stretching out his hands, said, "Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty."

Carna could not reply.

A dark spirit, swiftly falling towards her from the black roof, held her lips together and would not let her speak.

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"May the Lord receive the sacrifice from thy hands, to the praise and glory of His name, and to our benefit, and to that of all His Holy Church."

Again Carna tried to join in the response. In vain!

She felt that Doña Felipa had noticed the omission, she knew that her eyes were bent upon her. She felt that the Saviour at the altar had waited for her reply with growing sorrow. It was not that she *would* not, it was that she *could* not join in the response. This black fiend, she could not shake him off; he held her lips with jeering determination. When he released her, it was too late to do anything but moan.

"Let us pray," said the priest.

Then arose a murmuring all around her, whilst the people bowed their heads, whispering their mysterious *secreta*.

And still she was smitten dumb. She could only press her hands together and choke and tremble.

If Christ knew that she was there, did He resent her presence?

Then came the Canon of the Mass. The Host was elevated, and the bell rang thrice.

"*For this is My body!*"

She trembled and almost sobbed. In that still and awful moment after the ringing of the altar bell, with every head bowed, every voice hushed, she could not concentrate her attention upon the Host.

She was thinking miserably and aimlessly of some awful calamity that hovered above her, high up in the thick mystery among the rafters.

Surely that vast weight of coal-black night that hung like a mystic pall above the chapel could not be innocent! Just as it absorbed the departing smoke of incense and ate up the fragile light of the altar

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candles that seemed so far away, so, also, it gathered into its womb the most trivial details of this solemn mass, and always appeared to be listening, listening, and still heavily listening.

At length the Mass was ended. A few people rose and left.

Padre Martinez went into the pulpit; beside his face was a single wax candle.

He prayed and crossed himself, then he commenced his homily. The conclusion of the Mass, the movements of the priest, the climbing of Padre Martinez into the pulpit—all had seemed to pass dimly before Carna's eyes as in a trance.

Now she began to listen. She could not pray, but she could listen.

Commencing with the subject of the day, the Transfiguration of Our Lord, Padre Martinez, by an easy sequence, led to the blessings of self-sacrifice, the glory of conquering the flesh.

At first he spoke of men. Then—

"Not only *men*," said he, "were deficient in that moral fortitude which enables the spirit to stand triumphant and victorious with one foot upon the flesh, but cultured women, even those who seemed to the world so devoted to their Master as to scorn all material pleasures on this earth, were often the worst offenders."

And then he went on to compare the unhesitating sacrifice made by the Shepherd, with the selfish reluctance displayed, on occasions, by His flock.

He painted the dreadful agonies upon the cross, pausing between each period and the next to let his congregation gaze upon the marvellous sculpture above the altar.

Then, from the semi-obscurity of the pulpit, where

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the single candle flame cast a yellowish glow upon the speaker's uplifted hand, his deep voice would solemnly conjure them all to think of the awful fate that had befallen the Redeemer.

"Who, after realizing it, could hesitate to deny himself the gratification of his dearest heart's desire, if, so be it, that the glory of God required it? 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!'

"Ah! How little did some people realize what was the greatest joy upon this earth? How little did the selfish multitude think that a joy comparable to the infinite joy of paradise was here awaiting us if only we would grasp it! All human joys were evanescent. In anticipation they gave much promise; when realized, they were hollow and disgusting. Yet there was one joy attainable upon this earth, oh! a *mighty* joy, which partook not of this nature."

The speaker paused, and in the reflection of the altar lights he saw that all the dim faces were turned towards him. The body of the chapel was void of light and sound.

There was one face which was covered by a pair of trembling hands.

"This joy, then, what was it? Alas! it needed a little courage to attain it, and thus it was that so few might ever reach it. Only a little poor struggling courage of self-denial! This was all the preface!"

When he came to these words he spoke with a quiet

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scornful pity of human weakness, a tone of sadness and yet almost of amusement. Then he went on.

"There were very few there before him but had some worldly pursuit or pleasure which was out of keeping with their love of Christ. Some proclivity or inclination or affection which caused the Redeemer to look down upon them with a heavy heart.

"Let them conquer this defect, let them wrestle with and overcome it, glorying in the pain inflicted upon the flesh. Then, when the spirit stood triumphant and looked down upon the flesh where it lay writhing and vanquished, *that* was the greatest and most lasting joy attainable upon this earth. To look upon the Saviour where He hung upon the Cross and say, 'Dear Jesus, to-day have I pierced myself ever so little, yet I have pierced myself. Not as they pierced Thy lovely limbs and side and hands. Yet have I punished the flesh, and behold, my spirit rejoices beyond all understanding! Ah! might they live to revel in that moment! Might they one day know what it was, this blessed, blessed chastisement.'"

When the priest said this he saw that the face which had been covered by the hands was bent towards the ground. Only a trembling mantilla could be seen.

"What were we told of Saint Agnes? That she gazed with a mighty gloating upon the fire and racks and instruments that her persecutors were preparing.

"What were we told of Saint Paula? Saint Paula, at first, was weak. Her mind was wholly absorbed in earthly love of her own husband. She did not discern the secret attachments of her heart,¹ nor feel the weight of her own chains; she had neither courage to

¹ Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

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break them, nor light whereby to take a clear and distinct view of her poverty and misery.

"God, compassionating her weakness, was pleased in His mercy to open her eyes by violence, and sent her the greatest affliction that could befall her, in the death of her husband. Her grief was immoderate until such time as she was encouraged to devote herself totally to God. Paula erected in her heart the standard of the cross of Jesus Christ, and courageously resolved to walk after it."

He then went on to speak with scornful pity of those good souls who thought that our love for Christ should be fair-weather love.

"Let not those who flattered themselves that godliness, so long as it were easy, was all that was demanded of us. No doubt some people existed who thought that a pleasant walk to church once or twice a week, a few spare reals in charity, a nightly telling of the rosary, were all that was needed. Why, friends, what an easy goal to win is the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Padre Martinez almost broke into a laugh, so that every one knew that his words were spoken in irony. The smile died away before he spoke again.

"What did Christ answer to the rich young man who came to Him seeking the Kingdom of Heaven? Simply to give up the one thing that he held dearest upon this earth!"

Aye! To surrender one's riches! That she could do. But utterly to forsake her lover? Might God have mercy upon her!

"The rich man must desert his wealth, the father his son, the daughter her mother, the mother her child, the wife her husband."

Ah, dreadful pall of darkness! What is this tha

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thou hast been hiding in thy womb? The horror of last night, awaiting her in the chapel!

"Choose!"

The preacher had not pronounced that word. Whence had it come? She looked towards the altar, trembled, and undertstood.

"What ails thee, child?" whispered Doña Felipa, holding her by the arm.

The priest noted this slight movement although the light was dim, and paused to look down at them.

After the sermon was over the organist, by permission of Padre Martinez, remained at his seat, playing as in a reverie, gliding from mass to sonata, from sonata back again to mass.

His gown changed, his brow slightly knitted in a pensive frown, the Catalán priest was passing out of the chapel when a novice whispered to him. Padre Martinez raised his eyebrows.

"To confess? At this hour?" he said in apparent surprise.

"Yes."

"Who is she?"

Yet before the question left his lips the priest had told himself the answer. The novice pointed to a confessional box, abreast of a dark pillar. Padre Martinez recognised Carna kneeling beside it. The novice, at a sign of dismissal, turned and went away. The last of the congregation had departed. The Jesuits were slowly filing out.

* * * * *

The chapel was deserted.

Up in the organ gallery a tiny glimmer of light reflected along the dull metal pipes showed whence the rumbling chords rose up into the dark rafters.

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Dreamily, mournfully, the organ played, now growing bolder, now sinking into a dirge.

A novice stood by the organist, and when this novice moved from side to side, the glimmer of the candle disappeared, and a gigantic shadow robbed the walls and pillars of what little light had been spread upon them from the back.

On the East side, however, a white glow fell upon these pillars from the altar. A novice came in at the chapel door to put out the candles. He carried a lighted taper to guide him in the sacristy and upon his return.

Then, seeing the priest in the confessional bending towards the fretwork grating and the kneeling penitent outside, he paused for a moment in surprise.

Padre Martinez caught the glimmer of the lighted taper on the wood-work and looked up. His eyes met those of the young priest, who seemed to hesitate.

The older priest raised one hand to the window of the box, the forefinger stiffened, the other fingers closed. He cautiously shook this hand from side to side, looking down through the grating, as one motions away an intruder when a fish is about to bite.

The novice turned round. He understood that the altar was to remain lighted. But still he did not move. Padre Martinez looked up quickly.

The novice was pointing to the organ gallery. In dumb show he was asking if he should stop the practice.

Padre Martinez seemed to think for a moment, then shook his great forefinger again and pointed to the door. The novice blew out the taper, looked towards the altar, rapidly went down upon one knee and crossed himself. Then he went out and pulled the red curtains together. The brass rings sounded along

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the pole, the massive latch of the door was heard to fall stealthily in its socket, the organ rumbled gently, and everything else was silent and expectant, desolate and awful.

The Jesuit was speaking through the grating.

"Even this will He forgive, for His mercy is bounteous, His love all-pervading, and His sufferance co-equal with His might."

Carna, with her hands upon the sill and her face buried in her hands, was gently sobbing.

"Yet even to the immensity of His sufferance there is a limit, else would the heavens be peopled with atheists and infidels."

Carna trembled.

"And there is one who may not go thither, for he is doomed to Hell!"

"¡Ay! ¡Dios mío!"

"To Hell everlasting and most profound. Hell, where the conscious senses are imprisoned with the corpse to watch its slow putrefaction and go mad with the nameless horrors of the grave; Hell, whence the dumb spirit is allowed to wander and read, in the minds of the nearest and dearest left behind, suspicions of such foulness of itself that it flees shuddering back to Hell as to a home; Hell, where one sits and sees dread tragedies, murders, suicides, executions, all of those whom one loved best on earth—a word would stop the knife or save the prisoner, and that one word is the word that may not be spoken; Hell, where the myriad tortures of the flesh we know are blessed comfort compared with the tortured imagination of the fallen. To this Hell—your lover is doomed by God. And naught may save him."

"It cannot be."

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" 'Cannot' ! It *is* ! God Himself has spoken to you and has given you a sign."

" Yet He is a merciful God."

" Most merciful."

" And He would send my husband to this Hell ? "

" Aye ! You do not know the worst of him."

" Tell me ! "

" It is too base to tell you in this place."

" That he blasphemed ? "

" Aye ! Let us not talk of it."

" Why—so did *I* blaspheme ! "

" And you are forgiven."

" Then so should he be."

" His blasphemy was too appalling."

" I have affronted the Saviour. Are there degrees in such reviling ? "

" Betwixt yours and his, yes ! The difference between venial sin and mortal, between temporary punishment and eternal, between Purgatory and Hell."

" Yet my sin was without provocation. And *his* ? "

" Most foul and wanton ! "

These sombre words came slowly through the grating and seemed to chill her, for she shuddered at them. Spoken in a tone that was not loud, yet spoken with such intensity that one might have heard them at the altar, they echoed through the shadows of the chapel like some awful accusation before God's throne.

And, to Carna, such they were.

Whilst the penitent knelt sobbing in silence the priest watched her bowed head through the grating. Not callously, gloatingly, or cruelly, but simply with that intense observation peculiar to Padre Martinez when bent upon a purpose. Evidently he had con-

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cluded, whatever might be his object in that moment, that it was best not to interrupt.

An onlooker might almost have imagined that those eager black eyes had not only pierced the lattice and the mantilla, but that they had focussed themselves in the brain beneath that trembling sheen of hair.

Just as the chemist watches the changing colour in his test-tube, expectant but passionless, so Padre Martinez seemed to be patiently observing the current of nervous ideas and impulses that ebbed and flowed beneath his gaze.

No sign of disappointment or surprise showed in his face when the next of these impulses proved to be one of rebellion. The eyes seemed to have anticipated it. They merely noted its manner of development with studious interest.

Carna raised her face and lifted her hands to the grating above her head, clinging to it unconsciously as though it were the Rock of Ages.

"Then—if he be doomed to Hell——"

"*What*, my child?"

"Let me go too!"

Carna commenced to laugh. It sounded most horrible through the dark chapel. The organist paused to listen. The Jesuit came from the confessional and caught her by the wrist, crying "Hush!" and looking at her steadily. She obeyed, for his eyes subdued her.

After a pause Padre Martinez spoke—

"'Let you go too,' my child? And even if you might, do you think that this awful problem which God lays before you may thus be satisfied? Do you think, perchance, that with the sacrifice of your innocent and insignificant self—a grain of sand along God's

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shore of souls—do you think it is thus that His awful will is carried out ? ”

“ Oh, remember that I am fatherless. Alone in this world and at the mercy of those who are rending my heart ! Oh, think, is this the operation of some all-wise physician, that butchers my flesh to save my life ? Or is it the working of a crime more black and merciless than all the foul treachery of hell in holy guise ? ”

“ This, *this*, in this place, in this confessional ? ”

“ Aye ! If God demands of me this sacrifice, why should its naming smell so foul in His nostrils ? To my lover, whose wife I have sworn to be (and before God he is my husband), what you ask of me—his instant supplanting—this is for him a treachery as foul as hell itself, and do you not know, good father, that it may end in more than weeping ? ”

Padre Martinez paused, and then, as though obeying some well-calculated move, waved his hand imperiously towards the chapel door, frowning upon her with a look of wrath and indignation.

“ Ah, no ! no ! no ! ” sobbed Carna, as the reaction surged over her, and she struggled towards the Jesuit on her knees.

“ Woman ! ” he cried, still wrathful, and holding up his hand. “ You spoke of its being an operation, that butchers your suffering flesh to save your spiritual life. When will your poor dim sight look outwards beyond the narrow pale of human selfishness ? Can you not see how mighty an issue depends upon your action ? ‘ To save your life ! ’ Aye, that it *will* do, but that is incidental. You are asked to make a sacrifice and——”

“ You ask me to do that which I have not strength to carry out. Father, dear father, you tell me to do

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something beyond my poor will. To me it is *death*. What you ask of me is death."

" 'To be carnally minded is death.' May God help you to better perception, my child. Directly He puts a hard task before you, it is time for your poor body and soul to perish rather than that His will be done! What value all your professions, all your prayers, your fasting, penitence, and daily charity? These are mere diversions of the godly. 'It is not the person who *professes* to love' that loves, it is the one who is willing to *suffer* for that love. The hour has come in which He calls upon His faithful one to work His will. With a loving smile He awaits her gentle obedience, His lips already opened to commend her, saying, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.' And this is the moment that you choose—may God help us!—in which to cry, 'Let me go down to Hell!'"

When he spoke these last words the priest bent down and whispered hoarsely, looking fearfully towards the altar, and Carna, whose eyes were fastened upon him, felt that he was trying to hide her sin, to speak it secretly so that the Saviour might not hear.

She clasped her hands.

"And so long as I be in Hell, what more may God do to me?"

"Hush!"

"What matter to me in Hell that I have rebelled against His will, how may— ¡Ay-y-y!"

Carna, as though her hysteria were mastering her again, passed her hand across her eyes and uttered a sudden wail of misery.

"Come! Come with me!" said Padre Martinez, and raising her from her knees he led her gently towards the altar. Twice upon the way Carna halted and

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covered her eyes with her hands. The Glory of Calvary was before her. She trembled as she drew nearer to the cross.

On the steps the priest knelt and crossed himself. Carna did the same.

"Let us both pray awhile!" said Padre Martinez. And for a few moments he closed his eyes and crossed his hands upon his breast.

White lilies, blood-red pacíficos and spear grass in silver vases stood upon each side of the altar whence the chalice and Host had been removed.

Neither at these nor at the candles nor at the precious stones did Carna look. Her eyes met those of the image of Our Lord.

Presently the Jesuit commenced to pray aloud—

"Señor Nuestro, look down upon us in this our hour of trial and grant us strength wherewith to stand the test that Thou now puttest upon us. Watch Thou Thy gold that is passing through the furnace. Suffer it not to perish and turn to dross. Teach us, before it be too late, that each soul is but one atom of the whole, which here below is separated into parts, and hath not therefore the right to hide itself in Hell for lack of courage. Steel us, O Lord, to fight the good fight, and let us not quail before the first proof that Thou givest us. Grant us understanding, beloved Saviour, that we may see how the carnal love is but given us to try our strength. Beat down the passions of the flesh which compass us about, illuminate our path and shew us Thy kindly light. If so be that we must wrestle with unclean spirits, tear Thou off their cunningly painted masks. Aid us to know the Evil One when we meet him and let not Satan overcome us in treacherous disguise. Lend us Thy hand to save us

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from ignominious defeat, for the flesh is miserable and cowardly without Thy help."

Carna listened to this, and, whilst the priest prayed the image seemed to turn its eyes upon him to hear what he should say. Then, when he had ceased, the eyes slowly turned to Carna and looked upon her sorrowfully and tenderly, as though the Redeemer were filled with pity to overflowing at the agony within her heart. Yet in the eyes of the image, and in the eyes of Padre Martinez, there seemed to be this patient meaning—

"This, our beloved daughter, will triumph in the fight. Though this be the hour of her bitterness, soon cometh the hour of her prevailing. Now shall she realize that glory of all glories upon this earth, the glory of Calvary, the ecstasy of the Cross, the torture of the flesh turned to supernatural joy."

Padre Martinez was standing erect. He had drawn closer to the altar, and turning his head round to Carna, motioned with his hand towards the right-hand panel.

"Look!" said he, "how the beloved Saviour suffered in His hour of trial. Think you that He did not pass through far more bitter pangs than those you are enduring? For my part I cannot but believe that the greater agony of Our Lord was in the garden, rather than upon the cross, and that the anticipation of His woe was far more awful than the woe itself.

"Look how He sweats great drops of blood. As yet He is passing through the valley of the shadow of Death, His glory as yet unseen. But a little while and the holy lust of self-sacrifice will come upon Him. Then will His gentle eye grow calmer, His foot more firm as He treads the Judgment Hall in front of Pilate.

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Look where the Romans are coming, the light glittering upon their spears, and look at the false Judas approaching to betray Him with a kiss.

"And for what reason did Judas betray His Master? Even for an earthly love, the love of gold. He found not sufficient strength to prevail against temptation, the flesh overcame him, even as it strives and tussles to overcome you. Will you also betray your Master for earthly bribes?"

"¡ Señor mío !" murmured Carna with her eyes riveted upon the face of the image and her hands crossed upon her bosom.

And then after a pause—

"¡ Jesús mío !"

Tears were rapidly following each other down her cheeks, yet her features were not convulsed. This weeping was terrible to behold, it was terrible as a sweat of blood.

Padre Martinez paused for some moments to mark this alteration. Then, with a lower and more impressive voice, in a pause between the swellings of the organ, he went on—

"Look yonder!"

His hand was raised towards the central crucifix. The Christ, once more, seemed to live and move. The body wearily writhed against the nails in agony.

The flesh around the wounds was ashen where it was not daubed with blood, and almost seemed as though it were battling with Corruption and casting him off by supernatural aid.

"I see the Son of Man," said Padre Martinez, letting his arm fall by his side and half closing his eyes as though looking into the far East; "I see the Son of Man—He stands before Pilate. It is a warm summer's

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day, the heat has been parching, just as it has to-day. Around the hall and windows surges an angry, thirsty crowd, thirsty for blood. And a low murmuring like the distant humming of bees comes threateningly across the Judgment Hall and Pilate has turned pale. He has spoken again to the mob, again comes back a mighty deafening roar, 'Crucify Him !'

"He calls for a basin of water and washes His hands, trembling and looking upon the dear Saviour, Whose eyes are cast down.

"They lead Him away ; they strip Him, and crown Him with thorns ; they spit upon Him, smite Him and mock Him."

Padre Martinez paused and looked upon Carna. She was trembling.

"Again I see Him. He is stretched upon the cross. From the seething mob around there rises a fierce roar of exultation. The soldiers beat them back. Two soldiers are bending over the Saviour, one holds a great nail over His dear hand, down comes the hammer, once, twice and thrice. The scream of mortal agony is drowned by the hungry howling of the multitude. The hand is firmly nailed to the wood. Now they are nailing His sides, now His feet. It is finished. They wipe their blood-red hands, throw down the tools, spring to the ropes and rear the cross on high. Look yonder !"

And once again he motioned towards the crucifix.

"In His feet a nail, through each hand a nail, in each side a nail. What are our pains to this ? This passing of the Spirit into Hell, what are your sorrows compared with such awful woe ?"

A dreadful spasm seemed to pass across the Saviour's face, as though that sixth hour had come when the sun

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should be darkened, the veil of the temple be rent and the graves of the dead be opened.

"This He suffered for all of us, that we might walk with Him in paradise."

"¡Jesús mío!"

"Is there aught in this life we cannot surrender for love of Him?"

The face, its spasm passed, seemed to turn once more towards Carna; the eyes looked into her very soul, the expression was so wondrously beautiful and godlike, so full of love and tender entreaty; the lips seemed to be parted, as though in the act of beseeching her.

The Christ seemed to be telling her that she prolonged His anguish, that He must linger writhing against the nails until her selfish persistence be overcome, yet not to take heed of Him, for so He loved her that gladly He would remain in growing agony to ward off the moment of her punishment. Though graves had yawned, rocks had been shattered, and the earth plunged into utter darkness when He gave up the ghost, yet nothing should interrupt her thoughts, if it pleased her still to hesitate.

Thus went Carna's feverish meditations and shaped themselves yet more vividly, until the transfigured expression in her face showed that she was imagining such things as no pen can portray.

Suddenly she uttered a low cry and raised her arms towards the crucifix.

Padre Martinez, without a moment's delay, knelt down beside her.

"He is speaking to you, child."

"I know! I know!"

"His lips move!"

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"I know!"

"Listen! What is it He bids you do?"

"He is telling me."

"Something irrevocable that may not be gone back upon in the weak hours of the morning."

Carna's lips were parted in a loving smile, her arms held out towards the image of her dear Saviour. The words she heard seemed to come from afar, she scarcely listened to them, she scarcely knew whether it was the image speaking or the priest. She only knew that she was there kneeling to Him, adoring Him, her heart yearning towards Him with more intensity than had ever seemed possible.

"To send away your lover, that is of no avail." The face looked so steadily, and yet so lovingly upon her!

"To replace him, and replace him swiftly. *That* is the only way, that he may not return."

And now the eyes seemed to know that she would do it. She looked down upon herself as from far off, saw herself kneeling there, and *knew* that she would do it as He wished.

"A letter! Shall I bring you pen and paper to the steps that you may write? Now! Now, at once, whilst yet you have strength."

The priest, finding she did not answer, gently touched her on the arm. She realized that it was he who had been speaking and answered him—

"No! Hush!"

For a moment they both were silent. Then Carna spoke in a whisper, her eyes with distended pupils still gazing upon the Saviour, and the priest, bending nearer, comprehended that these words were not meant for his ears, yet now and again caught fragments of what she was saying.

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"And I, vile human worm, would have doomed Thee to linger there—That Thy dear will may be done!—Beloved Jesús of my soul—Receive Thou the tribute of Thy handmaiden—Yet may I spare Thee one drop of blood! ¡Dios mío! That this thing should be! How can the great God thus suffer His Lovely One to know the cold sweat of death!"

Without looking round she motioned to the priest, who whispered that he was near, and she bade him call Susana.

The priest stole swiftly down the aisle, out along the corridor, and beckoned to Susana, calling "sh!" and putting his finger upon his lips.

The organ was gently swelling from the bass of a solemn mass as they went up the dark chapel towards the altar lights where sparkled the gold and jaspers over the head of Carna, the image still looking down at her.

Susana crossed herself, then bent down beside her mistress upon one knee.

Padre Martinez stood aloof in the shadow of the reading desk, leaning one arm upon it, his black eyes fixed eagerly upon the two women.

"¡Susana!"

"What is your will, Señora?"

"Take the carriage——"

"¡Voy!"

"Seek my silk shawl, my mantón de Manila."

"Yes, Señora."

"Hang it over my balcony—¡Dios mío!—and—come back!"

Carna had not moved her eyes. Neither had Padre Martinez. Yet the image seemed to watch the retreating figure of the maid as she rose, bowed to the

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crucifix, and stole down past the dark pillars, half sobbing, all wondering, and afraid.

The black eyes of the Catalán priest were almost anxious as he stood there silently watching the kneeling penitent. He heard Susana's quiet footsteps go down the chapel, the clash of the curtain rings along the pole, the door pulled gently to, and the massive latch falling with a crash into its socket.

Then there was a pause.

The organ had ceased, and inside the chapel the silence was so profound that one seemed to hear the very candles burning. Beyond the altar the darkness was oppressive, pitiless, expectant.

Through one of the open ventilators behind the altar could be dimly heard the sound of far-away merrymaking in Cinco Caminos.

Las Ánimas sounded from the Cathedral of Santa Fe and went booming across the vega. Down came a gust from the mountains, the candles guttered, and one of them went out.

Padre Martinez, watching the greasy smoke, heard a sound of wheels outside the college wall. The carriage moved away slowly down the hill and the sounds subsided. A quiet sigh of relief came from his lips.

And to Carna it seemed as though the Saviour's agony were less poignant than before, His eyes welling tears of loving gratitude and almost of triumph.

Only for a moment she thought this.

Then, gold and jasper, pearls and rubies, flowers, agate, marble, ebony, wax and silver, all melted into a cloud.

Doña Encarnación fell swooning upon the steps of the altar.

CHAPTER XXIV

"Murder's as near to lust as flame to smoke."

PERICLES.

DON LUIS was striding down the lane towards his mother's home. As he passed the house of his cousin his humour was far from gay, his glance very far from kind. He looked towards the windows with a glowering savage fire in his eyes, then tried to laugh, twirled his moustache and stalked onwards without looking behind him.

Had he looked behind him and seen Carna's balcony, he might have halted there and then.

It was not until he stood before his mother's door that he glanced back towards the white villa of Carna. His hand paused as it rose towards the knocker, stopped in mid air, and came back to his hip, whereon it rested. His keen eyes peered strangely through the moonlight towards the distant balcony.

Then, with an oath of surprise, he stepped off towards the house of Carna González.

The windows were all dark. Not a soul was inside, for Doña Felipa and Susana were with Carna in the college, Tío Patas awaiting them outside upon his box, and the other servants were with their sweet-hearts at the fair in Cinco Caminos.

This, however, was unknown to Don Luis, whose glittering eyes looked upward at the shawl of Manila which was spread over Carna's balcony.

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Oh, balmy summer evening ! Oh, sweetest scent of orange blossom wafted across the vega ! Could these things be true ? What new thrill of life was this ? What passion of by-gone days awakened into being ? What triumph of patient love rewarded ?

“ Blessed be the mother that bore thee, the ground whereon thou treadest, the pillow whereon thou sleepest ! Pearl of pearls, rose of roses, the joy of Paradise is nothing beside the joy of that hour in which thine eyes look into mine with the light of six years ago.”

The front door was locked, the back door securely bolted. When he went “ sh ! sh ! ” nobody came to the windows.

He walked into the front garden and tried to peer in at the windows of the front room from the flower beds, but the room was all dark within.

He then went round to the reja of the little kitchen window, and found it just as lonely.

Finally he walked down the side path in search of a breach in the wall which he had known in the by-gone days. At this point the wall was only breast high, and the orchard rubbish being cast over it into the waste ground outside it offered an easy entrance.

A strange feeling came over him as he climbed across this barrier. It reminded him of the time when he used to enter his uncle's house, when the doors were closed against all visitors, and steal like a brigand into the kitchen, bidding the laughing servant maids be silent and asking for his pretty cousin to come down and walk with him in the orchard.

When he stood inside this orchard, clapping his hands to rid them of the dust, it occurred to him for the first time that this silence had a meaning.

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Carna was waiting for him alone !

Swiftly he walked up the path, treading upon the sharp shadows of the fig trees that moved gently to and fro, raised the latch, and with heart beating fast he stood inside the patio.

Silence !

Nothing but the scurrying of a rat which leapt right over his feet and disappeared inside a grating.

Then, as he stood and listened, he heard a quiet drip, drip, drip. It was the kitchen tap.

He pushed open the kitchen door. Inside were traces of haste, but nothing moved. Spoons and knives were huddled into an earthen basin ready for washing, but nothing was washed. A dying redness in one of the Moorish candelas told that no fan had fanned it for more than an hour. A small earthen pipkin simmered feebly.

Don Luis had learned to love in Manila in a way that was short and sweet. The steady constancy of pure love, which, though it may have something of passion at its base, is unaware of it, was not for Don Luis. It was of this fact, perhaps, that Doña Carna's keen woman's senses had told her, and caused her to be afraid of him.

Being thus constituted, Don Luis explained to himself the silence of the house in a way that brought the hot blood flushing to his cheek. He felt that a bride was awaiting him and daring him to seek her. With a dim consciousness that the surest place to find her was her bed-chamber, he nevertheless looked fitfully in every room, pausing at times to listen. He would leave her bedroom until the last. Yonder was the street door of the patio, where his cousin had lain upon the tiles inside, and he at full length outside, whispering

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to each other under the door as sweethearts will when others are in bed.

Only ten minutes ago he had glanced upon the outside of that door, feeling that it had closed on him for ever. And now he was inside, by invitation!

He looked into the reception-room, dark and overshadowed by the shrubs and palms outside. The shadow of one palm leaf moved lazily up and down, pointing towards the open lid of the harpsichord with its "*Sic transit Gloria Mundi.*"

Beside the sofa he could just make out two little house shoes. He strode towards them and his hot trembling hand closed tightly upon one of them which he lifted to his lips and kissed again and again. Then, as though typifying the strange mixture of passion and brutality in his composition, he flung the shoe away and walked swiftly from the room, glaring from side to side for other evidences of its wearer.

Carna's fan, her work-basket and darning, her waist belt, all these lying upon a table in the patio arrested him in turn. Just as some wild beast to whom one throws a coat and cap pauses to sniff at them, and then comes on with a savage roar, so did Don Luis pick up these trifles one by one, cast them aside, and leap up the staircase towards her room.

Outside the door he paused.

He felt that the dove was already within his grasp, and his heart was beating so violently that a great drumstick seemed to be pounding him upon his ears and temples.

"Gently, Cousin Luis!" he whispered to himself. "Our dainty sweetheart is not a swarthy Filipina!"

And then he closed his fingers upon the handle, turned it round, and slowly pushed open the door,

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which gave a prolonged creak from both its hinges. He laughed quietly with pure exultation. He felt sure that she must be inside. His joy was beyond control, his face had crimsoned with passion.

Then, peering hither and thither through the shadows, he gradually became aware that the room was empty.

On his right hand the snow-white bed, opposite to the bed the dark wall and crucifix, to the left of the crucifix the open window and balcony, the canary and the vine leaves, the stealthily moving shadows of the tendrils. The leaves in the orchard below were sighing. He paused for a moment, took one step forward towards the balcony, then suddenly halted and clenched his hands.

For the sound of two guitars and three men's voices rose like some weird enchantment from below.

After a while he stooped down and crept towards the balcony, and as his eyes made out the figure of his rival, the face of Don Luis became black with deadly passion, passion of another kind.

So tremendous was the hatred that possessed him that he became another being, a savage beast bent upon his enemy's destruction. And this impulse was all the more terrible and dangerous in that he did not give way to frenzy, he did not stand in the balcony and rail at the intruders, but drew back into the room upon his knees, his eyes like two burning coals.

He looked round the bed-chamber, his hand upon his throat, for he was choking. His glance fell upon the crucifix.

Stumbling towards it on his knees, he held out his hands to the Saviour, whispering hoarsely—

“Thou, Who hearest her nightly prayers, hear me

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also! Hear me vow that her bitter jest shall be answered by a jest more bitter still. Hear me! Hear me!"

He struck himself upon the breast, uttering a low hoarse cry of murderous fury.

* * * * *

The reason of Don Luis' interruption is easy to explain.

That evening at Las Ánimas, Juan, all unconscious of what had happened during the last twenty hours or less, stepped gaily down to a little wayside ventorrillo called La Casualidad, the favourite haunt of José Ramos.

He was bent upon carrying out an idea which for several days past had been slowly maturing in his brain, a moonlight serenade, and looked forward to giving his sweetheart a pretty surprise. He passed through the ventorrillo to the yard, overgrown with vine on the farther side. At a table were seated José Ramos and Nonito Breba. Nonito, younger son of the great doctor, was just such another gentlemanly ne'er-do-weel and just such another good fellow as José Ramos.

"Good evening, friends," said Juan, and throwing open his black capa with a merry laugh and sweeping off his cap, he asked them how they liked his green holiday suit of glittering *majo*.

Santa Fe, two decades behind Sevilla and Granada, still loved such things, still put them on to serenade or christen, aye! and sometimes even to get married, in memory of the early century.

"Faith, friend, a brave suit to go to wedding in!" said José, standing up to look at him.

"We too have kept our word," added Nonito, and

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raising his glass of Manzanilla to his lips with his right hand, he threw back his cloak with his left, disclosing a short jacket, a pair of knee breeches, and pink silk stockings. The coat and breeches were blood-red and tinselled all over with braid of gold. The inside lining of his capa was made of blood-red plush.

José's suit, like Juan's, was green and gold.

Juan clapped his hands, and they brought him a copita of wine.

"Your health, good friends and fellow conspirators."

José and Nonito each had brought a guitar.

After a few minutes of conversation they passed out through the ventorrillo, paying their reckoning at the wooden counter, then made for the dusty moonlit high road and trudged along the few hundred yards that separated the ventorrillo from the town.

Skirting the town, they passed along the beach, tuning their guitars and practising their trio as they went. José had a wonderful tenor voice, which was now well trained, and Juan sang very decently in baritone. As for Nonito, his fingers were better than his voice, yet he made shift to sing bass whenever his memory served him with the words.

At the loneliest point along the beach they all three stood and sang their final rehearsal.

"I think we shall do very well," remarked Nonito. And putting his guitar beneath his cloak, he passed along the water's edge, followed by José and Juan. When they came to the pyramids of salt they turned up to the left, crossed a sandy stretch of barren ground, and made towards the group of snow-white houses over whose roofs the towering eucalyptus waved gently against the dark blue sky behind. So thickly was the firmament studded with tiny stars that a palm

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tree on the left, when it moved its arms, seemed to be shedding jewels upon the housetop. The villa was in darkness.

This did not surprise them. With their loitering and rehearsing it was well past bed-time.

They took up their stand under Carna's balcony, whispering to each other. Nonito gently sounded a key-note. Juan beat time, and on the fifth beat they all commenced to sing without any prelude.

The words were those of Joaquín Pérez, the poet of Santa Fe. The music was composed by Guillermo Breba, who was even better on the piano than his brother on the guitar.

It is certain that the music was much better than the words, and since the words mattered nothing and the music very much, that, after all, is only as it should be. This is what they sang, and their three voices sounded very well. The first words of some lines, the last of others, were prolonged with a languishing note of passionate feeling, the guitars swiftly changing from one chord to another until the voice had fallen—

"What subtle charm thine eyes employ,
That gives me pain, that gives me joy !
That glance so sweet, yet so dismaying,
Those eyes so mirthful and betraying :
Thus God hath given to man in truth
Of His best handiwork a proof
Of what is mirth and what is gladness :
Of what is pain, and what is madness :
Of shining sun and smiling sky :
Of sudden storm that passeth by :
Of cruelty, anger, and disdain :
Of love and laughter, pity, pain.
This subtle charm thine eyes employ,
That gives me pain, that gives me joy."[†]

[†] From the Spanish.

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The singers' voices dwelt on the last note, then ceased. The two guitars joined in a sudden burst of rapid finale, the finale of the first verse and prelude of the second.

"Your lady will not show herself," said José to Juan, looking towards the silent window whilst his fingers ran up and down the strings.

"Wait!" said Juan. He too was gazing up at the balcony and trying to pierce the shadows beneath the vine leaves. The shawl covered the rail, or he might have looked up between the bars.

"I would swear I saw something move," whispered José.

"¿Estamos?" asked Nonito. "On the fifth bar, gentlemen." And they started to sing the second verse—

"The things they say when I pass by :
The love they tell and then deny
To-night enchanteth and to-morrow
My rapture maketh into sorrow.
Thus from one moment to the next,
I now am joying, now am vext.
One day thy vows I must believe :
Lament thy fickleness at eve.
What mystery is't that in the shade
Of thy dark eyes my soul hath laid ?
What hungry passion may this be
That bids me ponder thoughtfully,
The things they say when I pass by :
The love they tell, and then deny ?"

Now before the second verse came to an end, the baritone had ceased to sing. Juan, looking more intently into the dark embrasure than the others, saw a dim apparition with burning eyes, a thing that, seen

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in the uncertain shadows of the room, seemed neither man nor woman.

Then, straining his eyes to make certain that he was not dreaming, this strange appearance vanished. But even whilst he stood spellbound, the silken shawl began to move.

Slowly, inch by inch, pausing at intervals like a lizard that crosses the road and halts at every stone, the shawl moved upwards, and disappeared inside the room.

"What do you make of that?" asked Juan breathlessly, and turning with a sudden movement towards Nonito.

"Make of it? Ha! Ha! Ha! 'Make of it!' says he."

"You nearly threw us out of time, man—why, what's amiss?" exclaimed José, smiling.

"I say, what do you make of that shawl?"

"Faith. Nothing, man, if you do not know when you are invited——"

And they both laughed as loudly as they dared, plucking at their guitars to hide their merriment.

"Out on you!" cried Juan. "For shame! You make too free with me to speak thus about a very fair lady whose name is beyond reproach."

He looked at them hotly, but soon turned back and gazed up again at the window with clenched fists, forgetting them.

Nonito changed his tune, and looking hard at José, he played a few bars of a very merry ditty which referred to the wedding night.

But José shook his head at him, and motioned towards Juan who was standing rigid, his attention riveted upon the dark balcony.

Presently he called, "¡Carna!"

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After calling her name many times he took to throwing small pebbles⁷ gently against the glass of the open windows, and even inside the room. There was no reply. Nothing but darkness and silence.

"José," said Juan, "lend me your shoulder to hop upon. I am going in over yonder wall."

Nonito grinned very hard, and hid his face over his guitar.

"Friends," said Juan, as he sat upon the wall before dropping down into the garden, "I am going in here because I have good reason. Let each one think what he likes, and evil be to him that evil thinks. I pray you, Señores, get on with your ditty. The third verse will do very well without me."

"And when we have sung the third verse, and you are not returned?"

"Back to the first again!"

"Excellent!" said Nonito.

And then, in a lower tone, to José—

"And after the second time of singing?"

"Back to our beds, for when wood pigeons take time by the forelock such cattle as you and I must think of mending."

"Ha! Ha! Ha!"

And they fell into the prelude of the third verse, for Juan had already dropped down behind the wall.

* * * * *

When Juan lifted the latch of the patio and stepped inside, he at first saw nothing moving, and only heard the same lonely drip, drip, drip, of the water in the kitchen that had welcomed Don Luis.

His first impetuous thought had been for his sweetheart, but now for a moment a foreboding came upon him, and he felt that he was in the presence of some

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mysterious danger. Surely those two eyes that he had seen peering over the sill of the balcony were not Carna's! Surely they were no human eyes at all!

As he moved towards the middle of the patio, instinct bade him be cautious, and he glanced from side to side at the dark entries of the various rooms leading off the central courtyard, with an uneasy shudder when he had to turn his back upon them.

Then he heard a slight movement in the gallery, and, looking up, his eyes met those of Don Luis.

The eyes of Don Luis were like the eyes of a man who is maddened by drink.

Not only this, but his right hand was upon the bedroom door of Carna. Quietly, with a sneering smile, and without moving his eyes from Juan, the guardsman pulled the door to, turned the key in the lock, and put the key in his pocket.

Then, ever so slowly, step by step, his face still wearing a bitter sneer, he moved along the gallery and down the staircase humming the end of a rhyme about the "hare which leaps from the corner whence least she is expected," and repeating the last words over and over again—

"Porque donde menos se espera
Salta la liebre,
Salta la liebre,
La liebre salta."

A great tempest of wrath rose in Juan's heart; his face grew flushed with passion, then pale.

As the two men faced each other in the middle of the patio, each read something in the other's eyes that bade him keep ready his good right hand and stand upon his guard.

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Don Luis was the first to speak.

"Friend fisherman, what brings you here?"

"Friend captain, I came here upon my two legs."

"Yet two legs shall not serve to carry you away, unless the devil chops you a mighty short cut out of it."

"Your meaning is none the plainer for being loud, Don Fanfarrón."

"I have something here with which to let in my meaning, and, by God! we will see whether the worse pig shall get the better acorn."

The guardsman drew his rapier and had taken a step forward when Juan, whose hand had already gone to his belt, drew out his knife. The blade sprang open with the pressure of his thumb, and smiling grimly, he snatched off his cap and held it in his other hand.

"Knife and cap against your rapier, my captain! The bargain is not for *me* to grumble at."

Don Luis drew back, put his left hand into his belt, fetched out a knife and pressed open the blade. Then, he threw away his rapier.

Juan laughed derisively when he saw this manoeuvre of distrust.

"'Tis you who are the madrugador,¹ not I," he said.

Each man then deftly wound his *capa* around his left forearm, holding his knife between his teeth the while; Juan threw away his cap, and Don Luis came on at him.

But Juan budged not an inch, his eyes fixed intently upon the other's face, his left arm folded across his breast, his body leaning forward, his legs in the strained posture of one about to start onward, his right arm bent back, the knife, with his thumb along the blade, held level with the ground.

¹ One who lunges in when the other is unprepared.

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The guardsman halted within three yards of him, and crouched forward in the same attitude. Then, stealthily, keeping to the middle of the patio, each man began to circle round the other, watching his chance.

There is only one meeting in such a game. And when the parting comes, one of the players at least has become a corpse.

And each man, remembering this, yet eager to strike his enemy, strained every nerve and muscle to close within springing distance without exposing either one side or the other.

Each kept his eyes fastened upon his opponent's eyes, yet made shift to notice his surroundings, the crevices in the patio, the orange tubs and corners of the wall. For a hole in the pavement might be a back way to eternity.

Even the moonlight which streamed down into the patio put each man at a disadvantage when he came opposite, so that when he found himself moving in front of the moon he quickly spread his left hand over his eyes.

A cigarrón was chirping somewhere in the orange trees. Sometimes he stopped as if watching these stealthy figures, or perhaps he was listening to the guitars.

For José and Nonito were singing with a will, and already they had come to the second verse again :

“ What mystery is't
That in the shade
Of thy dark eyes
My soul hath laid ? ”

“ Anon, there shall be shade enough for one of us ! ”

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muttered Don Luis as Juan moved opposite to the moon. "And tell this to my pretty cousin, if your mouth is open in the morning! Bid her, after to-night, to get herself married, cloistered, or buried, with what despatch she may."

Don Luis burst out laughing bitterly, but he was wasting good breath.

Juan did not answer. Less carried away by fury than the captain, he was doggedly waiting his chance, his face like the face of Cain, brow knit, teeth set fast, and eyes staring. His greater height and strength were useless to him in this trial of skill, and he had the self-control to hold himself back until he saw his enemy's play. At times, when the serenaders outside were silent, Juan could hear the quick breathing of Don Luis, who constantly came on at him, wearing a cruel smile upon his twitching lips, the smile of the *matador* who comes to kill. As Don Luis came on, Juan, without retreating, moved towards his left.

Then, suddenly the captain flinched and almost fell backwards, crying, "¡Jesús!"

He recovered himself so rapidly that Juan could not have gained by attacking. Yet the Vizcaíno was able to note the ashen look that had spread over the guardsman's face, the smile having disappeared, leaving nothing but the nervous twitch behind it.

Juan undertood.

The creepers in flower-pots along the gallery, which let fall long strings of spider-like offshoots, had brushed against the face of Don Luis, who, feeling one of these great insects against his eyebrows and not knowing what it was, nor daring to look away, shuddered as though Fate had brushed against him. His fury changed to dread when this uncanny messenger flew past his face

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in the silent gloom, and, looking intently into Juan's steady eyes, he realized for the first time that his doom was written there.

He no longer advanced upon the Vizcaíno, his lips were parched, his forehead was moist with cold sweat. He tossed his three-cornered hat away behind him with a sudden movement of his left hand.

Juan now pressed steadily in upon Don Luis, who began to circle round him, breathing quicker and quicker, and ashen as a ghost.

And the four black gaping doorways around the patio seemed to be silent witnesses of this dance of death. A bedroom door along the gallery was creaking to and fro upon its hinges, moved by the gentle breeze which blew upon the guardsman's forehead, and felt like a hand of ice.

A distant voice called from outside, "¡ Juan !"

Then another voice, " We are for going ! "

This was followed by the sound of random chords struck upon the guitar, like one who waits or is uncertain. Juan at this moment caught his foot against the fallen hat of Don Luis, and looked quickly down and up again.

A hoarse cry, " ¡ Toma ! " and the guardsman, who thought that he saw his chance, leapt like a panther.

His knife, grazing upward along Juan's left arm, fetched the blood spurting from his cheek and cut it to the bone. But the captain, shuddering and showing the whites of his eyes, fell away as a sackful of meal, with a mighty gasp, that ended like a sigh. Juan's knife had buried itself to the hilt, just under his lowest rib.

So firmly had Juan gripped his knife that when he drew back he still held it, bloody and glittering.

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And two yards away lay Don Luis upon his side, full in the moonlight, his arms stretched out, his fingers closed, his pretty uniform like a slaughterer's apron. Slowly a tiny crimson patch began to spread along the tiles, and just a wisp of white vapour curled upwards from the hot blood and melted away in the thirsty summer air.

Juan bent over him. He drew out his handkerchief and tried to stanch the flow. But the merry blood found out another way, and, spreading under the clothes, came oozing out at half a dozen exits.

Juan knew that he was looking upon a corpse. He threw away the handkerchief with a moan, for with the sight of blood, and the rapid ending of the struggle, the cold, relentless, awfulness of his crime fell heavily upon him.

And José and Nonito began another verse.

Juan dashed the blood from his eyes and, holding his hand pressed tight against his cheek, sprang up the staircase. With a mighty pressure of his knee he burst open Carna's door. He stared round the room, only to find it—empty!

The sound of the guitars came to a sudden stop when the door crashed open. José called to him—

“¡Juan!”

For a few moments the great Vizcaíno stood swaying backward and forward in the little room, his hands held over his face, his finger tips pressing in his eyeballs, then staggered to the balcony. They cried out when they saw the blood upon his face.

“¡José!”

“God of my soul! Is that voice yours or a raven's?”

“Come up to me, man! And come quick!”

José, with Nonito's aid, crept over the wall.

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Juan met him at the door of the patio, holding his left forearm across his eyes and pointing, with his right hand behind him, at Don Luis.

José, open-mouthed and open-eyed, came into the middle of the patio, stooped for a moment over the corpse, and then threw up his arms, crying out in sheer despair.

Juan still stood with his back towards him, his face still hidden in his left arm, his right hand, that had been pointing, gradually falling to his side. The blood from his face had drenched the green plush of his sleeve, but he took no heed of it. For some little time José could do nothing. His lips refused to speak. He looked wildly at Juan in the shadow of the gallery, then at Don Luis in the moonlight, then back to Juan. Once or twice he raised his arms, then let them fall helplessly with a shuddering sigh.

Then Nonito began to call to them.

José, suddenly rousing himself, sprang towards Juan, and, seizing him by the arm, shook him to and fro. Juan turned to look at him out of his horror-stricken eyes.

"Awake! Away! Be off with you! For the love of Jesus get you gone, before it is too late!"

"Go?"

"Man, you have slain a captain of the Civil Guards!"

"Aye!"

"And there is only one refuge. Seek it flying! Be off!"

"Where to?"

"*To Carrasco!*"

Nonito ran in at the door, paused, saw the corpse, and went to press his hand upon the heart as José had done. A ghastly fascination took hold of Juan to



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look once more upon the face. He stole back, his lips curling with horror, stood for a moment beside Nonito bending low and clutching his arm for support, then turned round and covered his eyes once more.

“To Carrasco! to Carrasco!” cried José in his ear, as though trying to rouse him from his stupor.

And, Nonito repeating the word, both men caught hold of him, one on either side, and hurried him through the door, looking back over their shoulders at what they left behind them.

Don Luis, with glazed eyes and frozen smile, lay waiting for his cousin. This was not the “jest” that he had intended. But it would serve very well, for lack of a better.

CHAPTER XXV

Juliet. "O God! Did Romeo's hand shed Tybalt's blood?"

* * * * *
But wherefore, villain, didst thou kill my cousin?
That villain cousin would have killed my husband:
Back, foolish tears, back to your native spring,
Your tributary drops belong to woe,
Which you, mistaking, offer up to joy."

Romeo and Juliet.

THE drinking water that trickled from the kitchen pipe ran warm, and Conchita was coming with her pitcher to the fountain in the little plaza where the side street leaves the King's highway. The molten snow of the sierras comes deep in the earth along Moorish pipes of elm wood to this fountain, which stands beneath a pepper tree, resort of many gossips.

It was María's duty to fetch this water, but neither María nor Susana had the courage. Conchita volunteered. Yet even Conchita's brow was clouded against her will, her face looked fiercely cheerful, as by an effort, and she hummed a tune.

Where servant and mistress "thou" each other on occasions, and the maids have become part and parcel of the family, the house stands or falls as one solid rock, and each member bears the others' shame or glory.

At the fountain were half a dozen gossips, two of

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them old women with white hair and wrinkles, a portly dame of middle age, and three laughing girls with black hair, olive faces, and milk-white teeth, namely, Rafaela, daughter of the soap-maker whose shop stood opposite; Anita, the maidservant of one Doña Paca, who was a sea captain's penurious widow, living across the plaza; and Pepita, maid-of-all-work to a baker.

The chattering had been fast and furious until they saw Conchita, and then they suddenly became silent, and all of them looked very hard at her as she drew near.

Pepita was filling her pitcher, so Conchita had to wait, which she did with her hands upon her hips and the empty pitcher at her feet upon the ground. Her eyes looked fixedly at the jet of water, and her lip was pressed between her teeth.

Anita was leaning her bare arms upon the top of her pitcher, which stood in the trough, her face upon the backs of her hands, which crossed the pitcher's mouth. Her sparkling eyes gazed past Conchita's face and down the road with a look that seemed interested in something much nearer than the distant eucalyptus they were focussed on. Rafaela leant against the fountain with folded arms, her eyes like Conchita's, following the jet of water, and softly singing that verse of the Murciana, which goes—

" One dark night without a moon,
She fell weeping by his tomb.
Answered Silence, ' Spare thy breath,
For there is no cure for death.' " ¹

Rafaela's choice of a subject was not meant to

¹ From the Spanish.

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be appropriate. She was unconscious that Conchita was becoming more and more disturbed, for she was not looking at her. But presently she caught the eye of the fat matron who, with just the shadow of a smile, put her finger to her lips and shook her head. Then both of them looked at Conchita.

Pepita, having filled her pitcher, lifted it away.

"It calls my attention," said Conchita, using the haughtiest language she could command, "that day after day, year in, year out, you are jabbering away here like a nest of magpies, and this morning you all stare at one as if God had struck you dumb."

Her hands were curled outwards, and her knuckles rested upon her hips. Instead of lifting the pitcher under the spout, she pushed it with her foot and rolled it backwards and forwards on its side.

Nobody replied.

"Say something, Señoras, for the love of Mary say something, if only some of those same pretty things you were saying about us when I came along."

"And what if we were?" asked Anita, laughing and looking up at her with her right ear still pressed upon her hands and her arms across the pitcher.

"Just so! And what if we were?" said the matron stolidly.

One of the old women began to chuckle. Conchita bit her lip, for she felt twelve eyes upon her. She looked round at them all defiantly, the skin of her cheeks beginning to show dark crimson, her eyes flashing more fiercely even than her earrings, which leapt about every time she turned her head.

"Come! Let me hear what it was that you were saying."

"Oh-h-h!" said all the gossips.

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"Ah! So you dare not tell me!"

"*Dare* not! Who says 'dare not'?" cried the matron, puckering up her face and waving her right hand in eloquent circles, a pinch of imaginary salt between the thumb and finger.

"I say you dare not, dare not, *dare* not!" shouted Conchita, stamping her foot.

The women all looked at her.

"Some one has said," began Rafaela presently, stirred by the challenge, "that 'sweet faces tell foul lies!'"

"What else?"

"And some one has said," joined in Anita, speaking as if put out, and looking somewhat resentfully at Rafaela across the fountain, "that 'the nearer the church the farther from God,' and that this has been brewing for many a bright month in the Devil's Kitchen."

Conchita put her pitcher under the spout.

"What else?"

"And *I* say——" put in the matron, as if ashamed of these anonymous accusations, and ready to lay claim to her opinions and back them up, "and *I* say, that the Devil's kitchen is not in the mountains, as many people suppose it to be. For the Devil's Kitchen is the very one you come from, and may God give you the gumption to get out of it, with as little delay as possible, for until you do so you stand very ill in the eyes of all honest people."

"What else?"

Conchita was standing erect again, her hands upon her hips, her eyes like a basilisk's, her breath coming fast.

"What else? ; Nada! That your mistress has

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decoyed her own cousin into her bedroom, there to be foully murdered by her paramour, that never was a brave and bonny man so cunningly trapped and done to death in all Santa Fe, nay, not even in a brothel! God save us from these wicked times, say I, and let this be a lesson what to expect of pretty faces."

"What else?"

"¡Nada!"

"And, in truth, it is enough! Well, Señoras, since you thus trust me with your confidence, it were a pity you should go unanswered. It seems you have said some truths, and some things that were otherwise. The one that says, 'Sweet faces tell foul lies,' learnt it at home. Go, ask her own mother who was father to her daughter, the cobbler to the left, or the goodman of her house. And what will her face reply? Yet can it——"

"¡Ay!" screamed Anita. "What infamy! What lies!"

"Then if they be lies, why are your cheeks so red? One might toast beans in front of them and save the fire! As for the one who says, 'the nearer the church the farther from God,' ¡señoras! I remember a certain holiday week when she must have been close to God indeed, for she kept mighty far from the church, and many seemed to think she had more need of churching than any soul alive, though it isn't for me to say!"

"¡Jesús! ¡Señoras! Was ever the like of this heard before in Santa Fe?" cried Rafaela, bending across the fountain with her left hand on the sill, and the right hand brandished before her face.

"¡Hija! Calm yourself!" sneered Conchita, with an imperious flourish of her hand. "What else was to be expected? 'She who was born in a soap-maker's

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shop must needs slip a bit,' they say, and the fault lies with your father for not choosing a cleaner trade."

"Beneath—my—foot!" cried the matron, anxious to join issue, "two blacks don't make a white. Your mistress has tripped, and 'tis always the finest cloth that most shows up the spots. This is a spot that won't come out in the washing either. Have a civil tongue. You are beside yourself with malice."

"Aye!" said Conchita. "And if malice made one black in the face, how many of us would be niggers? I have been speaking to the child, let the nurse listen! And now I come to it, the nurse pleases me better than the children, for people who throw stones and then hide their hands are not worth wasting breath upon! And, to begin with, Señora, if I may go back a bit, why did they clap your good man into gaol this very last Ascensión? Was it for being too honest?"

"Infamous trull!" roared the matron, stepping towards her. "Filthy, infamous trull! Fresh from a house of shame, with lewdness in its bedchambers and blood upon its threshold! You——"

"¡Chis!" cried Conchita. "Don't open your mouth so wide, for fear of bluebottles! These be the 'honest people' we should think upon! This comes of envy and hatred! What has troubled you this many a year is—we will have none of you! For those who lie down with dogs, get up with fleas! What fault of ours that we are well-to-do, whilst others have only their finger nails to feed upon? Mary be praised, we owe nothing but our souls to God, and that is the dust that's gone to make this mud, for it isn't the custom in Santa Fe. As for your insults, Time is father of the Truth, and to mad words I turn

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deaf ears. 'Murder!' 'Decoy!' You lie, you lie, and may they frizzle you well in purgatory and melt your illgotten fat! And as for 'pretty faces,' if *foul* ones be a surety of godliness, why, go no more to confession, nor look on Holy Water; you have no need of either! ¡Ea! ¡Señoras! I wish you a very good day! Our house's good name is far beyond your reach. You have spat at the sky, and your spittle has fallen on your faces. What I have said, I have said, and if I had two mouths I'd say the same with both."

Muttering angrily to herself, Conchita lifted up her pitcher, snapped her fingers furiously in their faces, burst out laughing very loudly, and stepped away.

The fat matron was dumb with spleen, and Rafaela and Anita frowned upon each other with scarlet faces, whilst those who had said nothing made merry of it all.

Meanwhile Conchita, her throat swelling and her eyes swimming, let three or four great tears fall upon her blouse, and made her way back along the lane towards the house. Every shutter was closed.

The fierce sun was sweltering down upon the white-washed walls. A land wind was blowing, the leaves of many trees were drooping in the scorching blast, and the only sign of life was a slate-coloured lizard, which climbed up the house front by jerks and pauses, zig-zagging first to right and then to left, now behind the leaves of the creeper, now emerging into the scorching snow-white desert of whitewashed wall.

At the gate Conchita suddenly drew up, almost dropping the pitcher with the jerk of her stoppage. The water splashed out of the mouth and fell on her white stockings, rolled off on to the ground, and almost before it fell the sun had spirited it away.

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Her eyes were looking horror-stricken upon the left-hand gate post. Underneath a great festoon of convolvulus that came down halfway from the cap stone, the brickwork was bare and whitewashed like the house. In the middle of this bare space was daubed a great cross in blood, nearly a yard in height. Underneath it in the same horrible paint—blood from the slaughterer's—was smeared—

*"Aquí mataron á Don Luis González.
Rueguen á Dios por su alma."*

Conchita, who could not read, knew from old custom that these words must mean: "Don Luis González was murdered here. Pray for his soul to God!"

"¡Ay!" she cried, and putting down the pitcher in the corner, buried her face in her apron.

Presently, still snuffling and terrified, she drew herself together. Then, as if an idea had occurred to her, she crept trembling round the corner along the pathway that went under Carna's balcony.

Nor was she disappointed.

Just beside the iron-barred window of the kitchen and underneath the balcony was a still larger cross, made, like the other, with blood, and the words—

"Rueguen á Dios por Don Luis."

"May the Virgin look down upon us and help us!" cried Conchita, clasping her hands.

"What is it?" asked a low trembling voice from the kitchen window. It was María.

"May the Lord have mercy upon us," said Conchita hoarsely, "there is that upon the house that cannot be rubbed out, nay, not while one stone is left standing

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upon another, for it would come again through twenty generations."

María was silent, for she knew what this meant, and staring into Conchita's dilated eyes she seemed to see the horror upon the wall reflected in them.

Conchita went slowly back to the gate, picked up the pitcher, and went in, María meeting her at the door. The dead man had been buried yesterday, yet they still spoke in whispers.

"How many are there?" asked María.

"Two," whispered Conchita. "One at the side, and one upon the gate post. ¡Jesús! It seems as if I had brought home blood in the pitcher."

Both girls looked at the dark water which splashed from side to side in the neck of the pitcher, then down at a certain spot in the middle of the patio, each thinking that she saw blood upon the tiles.

"Where is she?" asked Conchita.

"In the orchard, walking up and down like something bereft, in the shadow of the fig-trees."

"And Doña Felipa?"

"Gone to her bedroom. I think she has given up all hope of ever soothing her!"

"So I should think! The old woman must sell her fat and buy some honesty, and my mistress has much the same suspicion as I have."

"What do you suspect?"

"About Doña Felipa? What I have told you before, that this evil had never fallen on the roof if her sly old face had never looked in at the door."

"Aye! She has a cunning look."

"He who sits near an evil tree must expect to sit in an evil shadow. I'll to my mistress."

Conchita poured some of the fresh water into a glass

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and went out into the orchard, where Doña Carna, or rather the ghost of what had been Doña Carna only two days ago, was pacing to and fro.

She took the glass of cold water and drank it eagerly.

"Courage, little one," said Conchita (who was one year Carna's junior); "the world is still going round, the sea lies where it was, and we may all of us live to weep at something else if only we be more provident of our tears. You are watering the very fig roots. God grant it may be forgotten before San Juan comes round again, and all of us be wondering why the figs should taste so salt."

"Oh, *never, never, never* can this horror be forgotten!"

"'Never' is a long day, and there was never yet an evil that lasted a hundred years."

"The horror of it! The appalling guilt of it! The relentless grinning truth of it! The nameless foulness of it! The lasting shame of it!"

"'Shame'? Who said 'shame'? Were we not elsewhere when the deed was done? Why, who has dared to 'shame' you of it?"

"Wicked that I am to think of shame, when yonder poor cold corpse cries out for vengeance on me and mine!"

"Aye! Let it cry, we must all come to it some day, 'Vengeance' troubles him not a whit. 'Tis only worms, poor lad, that sit upon his conscience. Who is it, though, that breathes a word of 'shame'?"

"All Santa Fe will shout it in our faces! Oh, happy corpse, could I but hide me from the world like you, a yard of earth between!"

"Pish! A yard of bride's veil shall hide thee yet!"

"Nay, but I think that a nun's veil shall."

"To the devil with all priests and nuns!"

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"Hush!" said Carna, and put her hand over the other's mouth.

"— and Jesuits!" cried Conchita, pulling away her hand. Then, seeing Carna's prostration, she relented, and drew nearer to her.

"Alas!" said Conchita to herself. "Who would think that here, in this very fig-tree, we were gathering figs and talking of the wooing, only on the morning of St. John the Baptist, and look what has come to pass! Faith! I was born weeping, and every day since I have been finding out the reason."

For a little while Doña Carna stood motionless with her face buried in her hands, as though she had suddenly forgotten the maid's presence, then cried with a gesture of despair—

"Oh, Conchita, his mother looked in through the window, and our eyes met. It seemed as though a flash of angry lightning had fallen on my eyeballs."

"Looks cannot kill. In time she will know the truth."

"Aye, but what *is* the truth? Will any of us know?"

"Yes, all of us but you."

"And why not I?"

"Because—because it is the business of some people that I know to hoodwink you."

Carna stood leaning one hand against a fig-tree and looked at Conchita.

"What do you mean?"

"What I have said before, Señora, this house smells too strongly of Jesuits."

Doña Carna made a weary and half-hearted gesture of disapprobation.

"Nay," cried Conchita, "I will not be silent! I love God as well as any of His creatures love Him, but

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He never left me word to love the Jesuits. 'Tis my opinion that when God comes to see us He comes without bell, book, or candle. You have too much of your mother, and too little of your father, to hold your own. You are like a young linnet fallen into a crow's nest. I have watched you weeping these two days, and now it is time you were up and doing, for God knows there is much to be done, and the Guardia Civil are hunting your lover in the mountains like a pack of bloodhounds on the track of a wounded slave. Welcome Misfortune if she comes alone, and take care there be not *two* dead men instead of one ! ”

Doña Carna looked fixedly at her maid, and her pale face became yet paler. Presently Conchita spoke again.

“ Don Juan,” said she, “ is the nephew of the Father Rector ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, I have got it into my head that the Father Rector is the only follower of Jesus of all the Jesuits, and if not, then ‘ sweet faces tell foul lies ’ indeed ! ”

“ And do you think that my mind has not already turned to him ? Would that he were here ! ”

“ When will he return ? ”

“ To-morrow or the day after.”

“ Padre Ignacio,” said Conchita slowly and thoughtfully, “ was the only one of them all that was really grieved when Don Ramón your father died last year. I watched him when he thought he was alone, and I heard him pray, and his words they seemed so patient and so pitiful they made me cry like any fool. I remember it well, it was late at night, and he in the room beside the corpse with candles burning, and I beside the door. ‘ Lord ! Lord ! ’ said he, so quietly, ‘ take Thou into Thy bosom another of Thy tired chil-

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dren, whose little race is run!' So he began, then paused awhile and then went on——"

But by this Conchita had also fallen to crying, and dropped upon her knees beside her mistress. Moved by one impulse the two women threw their arms round one another's necks and sobbed for a while contentedly.

"Thou art nothing but a poor fool of a woman after all, and like myself," said Doña Carna, kissing Conchita.

"Ah!" said Conchita, kneeling up in front of her, and dabbing her eyes with her red petticoat, "I fear it would take ten of us to match a man, though one of us alone can make ten of them with the help of the priest and doctor, and even without, upon occasions. Oh that I were a man this very moment, and knew just what to do! What's wanted here is a pair of honest breeches, and without them we poor women can do nothing but cry '¡Ay!' For we were born with the belief that they only got us for washing dishes, and what comes in with the bib goes out with the shroud. It's my belief that the men are only poor fools beside the women, but it's good to have a gruff voice and stamp about when rats are stirring. God knows there are rats enough in Santa Fe! And chief among them, one great he-rat with coal-black eyes, and a great fat she-rat, that's peeping out of her hole this very moment."

Carna understood, for she clasped her hands and looked up at Doña Felipa's window with a start, just in time to catch a glimpse of a disappearing mantilla seen through a leafy tunnel of vine and fig-tree.

"And you still believe in them!" said Conchita scornfully.

"No! No!" replied Carna hysterically, leaning her head once more upon the other's shoulder and clasping

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her feverishly round the neck, "but last time that I rebelled, I committed blasphemy."

"Didn't they ask you to forsake him?"

"Yes."

"And to invite Don Luis?"

"Yes."

"¡Jesús! And has your sorrow so befooled you that you cannot put two and two together?"

After a little while Doña Carna spoke again.

"I praise God," said she, "that He has sent you, good friend, to hasten my tardy judgment. I was coming, I think, by the same pathway, to the same place, but coming slowly, for this shock has altogether dazed me. You are right. What we need is a man's counsel, and that man shall be my lover, and before God, I will no more forsake him till God bids me with His own mouth from His own throne."

"Amen! The blessing of Mary upon you for those words!"

"And I must speak with him."

"What, in the mountains?"

"Aye! Now it is *your* turn to play the coward."

"Not I! Only, have a care that you be not a lantern to light the Civil Guard."

"I had thought of it, for the idea has come and gone a score of times. Have no fear! Where is Tío Patas?"

"I do not know. What would you have with him?"

"Conchita!" said Doña Carna, bending eagerly towards her maid and whispering in her ear. "Was he not once a contrabandist?"

"Aye!"

"And knows Carrasco? And where to find him?"

"And the Devil and his wife and daughter too,"

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Señora, and all the hobgoblins, he can bring them in a trice, for there's nothing foul in Christendom that isn't known to Tío Patas."

"Nay, what matter, so that he be secret and serve our turn. I think he is very faithful."

Conchita pursed her lips slightly, as one who has a feeling of discomfort in a thing that is proposed, but knows no good alternative.

"I will go and find him," she said, "and will bid him come to you in the front parlour. Will you be waiting there?"

"Yes."

Conchita went towards the house.

"Stay!" cried Doña Carna.

And when Conchita came back, she found her mistress with a haunted look upon her face, her hands pressed tightly against her temples.

"Conchita——"

"What?"

"How do you think he did it? That he came on at him in fair fight, that Luis attacked him, he but defending himself, and so, in self-defence——"

"Why, how else should it be done?"

"Why, no other way, surely!" cried Doña Carna, speaking very hoarsely and very quick. "But, God in Heaven! There were other ways another might have done it, as thus, stealing up close behind him in the shadow—eh?—and burying his knife before he turned on him!"

"Don Juan? Never!"

"Nay! Who said so? Not I! I say *another* might have done it in such a way, and therefore more honour to my dear lover that he fought it fairly as he did. But—j ay! The horror of it! That hand that

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has blown kisses to me! ; Jesús! What various offices one's hand may do; this morning writing a love letter, at noon a death warrant, to-day shaking a man by the hand, to-morrow slaying him!"

"Only just now I could have sworn you had forgotten aught else but your lover's peril!"

"Aye, so I *have*. Go find me Tío Patas!"

"And leave you still despairing when you might be doing?"

"I have done weeping. Flesh and blood must needs cry out at times. Why, what are *you*, that you cannot weep as well? Have you no bowels of compassion?"

"For the quick, but not for the dead!"

"I know, I know!" cried Doña Carna, burying her face in her hands once more. "I have the spirit of a thousand men in me to save him, but whilst there remains one little drain of water wherewith to weep, I must be rid of it. Anon you shall see my face as stiff as starch, seethed by a red-hot iron. Then shall I be González. Wait but a moment whilst I forget that my mother was a woman!"

"Shall I tell you what your lover is thinking of you in this moment? That you *tried to ensnare him to his death!*"

"¡Ay!" cried Carna. And she turned so ashen white and knelt looking at Conchita so fixedly, that the maid saw that a crisis was at hand.

"There passed the iron!" said Carna, rising to her feet. "Here stands González!"

CHAPTER XXVI

King. "My lord Chief Justice, speak to that vain man."

Ch. Just. "Have you your wits? Know you what 'tis you speak?"

Falstaff. "My king! my Jove! I speak to thee, my heart!"

King. "I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers."
King Henry IV.

WHEN Tío Patas made his way into the dark parlour, he could at first see nothing, for he had just come in from the sunlight. But he heard the scratching of quill on paper and gradually made out Doña Carna who was seated at a card table with her back towards him.

"Close the door!" she said, and he closed it, standing hat in hand and peering at her through the uncertain light from under his shaggy eyebrows.

Presently the sound of quill on paper ceased, the letter was sanded, closed, and sealed with a wafer.

Doña Carna came towards him.

"Friend Patas, I want you to do me a great service, the service of a lifetime perhaps."

She folded her little hands in front of her and looked at him from her careworn eyes. The old man seemed less uneasy.

"Do you know Carrasco?"

"Eh?"

His eyes had wandered to the floor before the sorrow-

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ful gaze she bent upon him, but he looked up quickly at the mention of Carrasco.

"Good Patas, this is no time for mincing. Though Carrasco be a bandit, there are many know where to find him. To me, it is a matter of life and death that you should know his hiding-place, and I ask you, in all secrecy (God knows), can you meet with him?"

The old man's eyes moved rapidly in their sockets, first turning to Carna's face, then to the windows, then to the gloom behind her.

"There's a price upon Carrasco's head, and a heavy price it is," he said at last.

"Aye, but we are going to trust each other, you and I. See, I am going to trust you with my life and with my lover's."

"The Civil Guard have more ways than one of worming out secrets."

"Look!" cried Carna, going eagerly to the wall and returning with a crucifix. "Hear me swear that no torture shall ever goad me to tell of Carrasco's hiding-place. I swear it, let the Virgin hear me!"

And, falling on her knees, she feverishly kissed the crucifix.

"Now, do you doubt me, good Patas?"

He pursed his lips tightly as though calculating, then looked down at his hat, the crow's feet coming in the corners of his eyes.

"What do you wish me to do, Señora?"

Carna rose trembling, and going towards him placed a hand on either shoulder, looking into his face.

"Friend Patas," she said slowly and hoarsely, "I want you to take my life and my lover's—in your hands."

"I am yours to command, Señora."

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"Swear!" she said eagerly.

He took the cross between his dirty fingers.

"Swear to tell no living soul what I am about to bid you do, swear by the Holy Mother to die rather than betray your trust."

"Not even to the Jesuits?"

"Least of all, least of all," she cried, wringing her hands. He repeated the words after her and seemed to kiss the cross, though some lingering scruple of conscience or of fear caused him to kiss his hand or the empty air.

Carna put away the crucifix, then came to him again.

"My lover is with Carrasco. Deliver this note into his hands, let no one see it, let no one guess your mission."

He took the little envelope and placed it in his breast.

"Señora," he began slowly, "what you bid me do is—¡vaya!—I have not so long to live, but an ounce of lead in my old skull, from a Civil Guard's rifle, why—look you—"

She took a purse from her basket upon the table and thrust two chinking gold pieces into his hand.

"When?" she asked breathlessly, bending towards him.

"This evening, after sunset," he whispered.

And stealing out of the room as if conscious already that he held a secret mission, he climbed up into the hayloft and knelt grinning and mowing over the lifted floor board where he kept his treasure.

La oración was over when Tío Patas, peering all around him into the darkness, halting suddenly to listen for a footstep in his wake, then making on again, arrived at the low wall on the far side of the convent. This wall was opposite the Hill of Calvary, on whose

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summit stood the three stone crosses towards which good Christians struggled on their knees on Crucifixion Day. There was no path, and visitors were never seen upon this side of the building.

Climbing to the top of a little mound, he scaled the wall, not by dint of great agility, but simply from his knowledge of every ledge and foothold.

He then crept up the west avenue of palm trees, and made for the kitchen door.

One of the lay brothers was seated upon the step, trimming the wick of a lamp.

"Hist!" said Tío Patas.

The man had not heard him coming, and looked up surprised.

"Ah! It is you, good Patas! What do you want?"

"Tell Padre Martinez I must speak to him."

"Must!"

"Aye! Upon matters, tell him, concerning us all very closely."

The Jesuit smiled to himself. He lighted the wick in silence, put on the glass, left the lamp just inside the doorway and went away.

Tío Patas leant in at the door, blew out the light, and sat down upon the doorstep.

"Dead men tell no tales," thought he to himself.

"But, alas! they are bad debtors. Just as I was in sight of a hardly-earned reward, ¡zas! come six inches of steel and whip away my reckoning. Well says the proverb that 'one should not kill the goose which lays the golden egg.' Nay, but others will kill it for you!"

And he sat down with a hand upon each knee, sighing deeply and looking out towards the waning moon which shone on the peaceful sea, and up at the skeleton

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leaves of the palms which rocked gently to and fro along the avenue.

Slowly a smile stole over his wrinkled features, and one might have judged by his expression that already he had spied another goose, nay, a whole flock of geese, up yonder in the moon.

So absorbed was he in his meditations, rubbing his hands up and down along his knees, that the lay brother touched him on the shoulder, and looking round suddenly he saw Padre Martinez standing in the doorway, silent and motionless.

The priest's hands were buried in his sleeves, his arms were folded. His eyes, though unable to quench their eagerness, had a light which was something of contempt, and his clean-shaven lips said plainly that his mood was heavy and wrathful.

Tío Patas was unable to note these symptoms in the darkness of the porch.

"The lamp has gone out," said the lay brother, stooping to light it.

"I blew it out," said Tío Patas shortly.

"And why did you so?" It was the voice of Padre Martinez. It sounded angry and foreboding. Tío Patas drew back and paused.

"Because—we must not be seen together."

"We?"

"Are we not here all Jesuits?" asked Tío Patas, looking round him and holding out his hands.

The Catalán priest came down the steps into the moonlight.

"We!" he cried angrily. "You one of us!"

"In a very humble capacity, and as a layman, that I allow, but——"

"You one of us!"

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"¡ Pues ! Señor——"

The old man, fearful and apologetic, wondered what avalanche was about to fall.

" Friend Patas, let us understand each other. Why do you come here and ask for me by name ? "

" I thought——"

" Why do you scale our wall, like a thief by night, steal across our garden—aye, we saw you—and blow out our lamp ? What sudden knavish impudence has bidden you use my name ? "

" I have something here that you would care to see." He took the letter from his bosom.

" And why should I care to see it ? "

" Because—¡ vaya !—because it treats of things that you are concerned in."

" And what things," thundered the Catalán, " have you and we in common, that anything of yours should concern any one of us ? "

Tío Patas felt that the more he spoke the worse pickle he was getting into.

The Jesuit took a step towards him and glared angrily into the old man's cunning eyes.

" Why did Don Ramón González ever take compassion on you ? "

He looked down at his hat which he was crumpling uneasily in his hands.

" What happened in your—domestic circle—that all men shrewdly suspected, though it never came to light ? "

The old man trembled.

" Where should you be to-night, you old *gaol-bird*, if Justice had her own ? "

" Have mercy ! "

" Aye ! as much mercy as you once had ! Friend

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Patas, a word of advice. Talk not henceforward of 'us.' When it pleases you to seek my company, seek me in open daylight when I walk abroad, and not like a thief by night, with lamps blown out. Think on the past. Remember that tarrying Justice sometimes looks over old scores. And don't forget that there is a Guardia Civil in Santa Fe."

For a few moments the three men stood silently beside each other, Padre Martinez frowning upon Tio Patas, who looked down upon his hat and hung his head.

"As for your letter, did you ever bring me any one's letters to read before?"

Tio Patas looked up quickly and was about to speak.

"Answer!" cried Padre Martinez, with his face like a raging tempest, and taking another step forward.

"No!" replied the old man suddenly, looking down again.

"Then why do you bring me this?"

Tio Patas shrugged his shoulders.

The Jesuit said something to the lay brother in French, then strode away six or seven paces and looked out upon the sea.

The lay brother put out his hand to Tio Patas, who gave him the letter. He took it inside the doorway, carefully examined the wafer with which it was sealed by the light of the lamp, went through a corridor, and after a few minutes returned with the lamp in one hand and the letter in the other.

He then placed a small wafer on the envelope to compare it with the wafer which sealed it, satisfied himself that the two were alike, deftly passed a silver cutter between the paper and the wafer, and after a few moments of careful handling he had it open. The note

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was short, but he read it through several times, his lips moving as though he were learning it by heart. Then he quickly replaced the letter in its envelope, sealed it with the new wafer, looked at it carefully with a smile, and coming outside, gave it to Tío Patas. The whole operation had barely lasted five minutes.

Padre Martinez came back to them as Tío Patas was replacing the letter in his bosom.

"What have you here?" asked the priest, placing his great forefinger over the letter.

Tío Patas offered to take it out again.

"¡Ajá!" cried the priest with an angry look, "would you betray your trust? Did I ask you to do so; mark me, did I ask you?"

"No."

"Have I so much as touched the letter?"

"No."

"Has it even been opened? Answer me, sir!"

"No."

"And 'tis well that it is so. Go, and remember!"

The priest pointed peremptorily down the avenue, nor let fall his finger until Tío Patas had gone down the steps.

When Tío Patas had already left the college gates behind him the lay brother came running after him up the hill all out of breath.

"Will you come back this way to-night, friend Patas?"

"I doubt not. I am like to spend the night in the Devil's Kitchen. And, God's truth, I prefer the smell of it to yours!"

The lay brother laughed good-humouredly, holding his hand on his panting side.

"Take no umbrage of Padre Martinez. You dis-

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turbed him at his studies. May be—if you can keep a quiet tongue—you and I can have a little friendly chat together sometimes.”

There was an accidental chink, as of money, in the Jesuit's pocket.

“When you come back, be it to-night or to-morrow, ask for me. I have another message for you to take, and one which may profit you. Can I reckon on you?”

“Aye!” said Tío Patas.

And giving each other good-night they turned and parted.

For some little time Tío Patas plodded up the hillside wrapt in thought.

When he reached the pass, he turned round and looked down upon the magnificent panorama spread out beneath the moon in the Bay of Santa Fe. But he was not regarding the glories of Nature. He stood for a moment with his mouth stretched open, and scratching his stubbly cheek with his forefinger, then shrugged his shoulders and cried “Pish!” as if dismissing an unpleasant subject from his mind. Then, after standing still for a moment, a light seemed to come into his wicked old eyes, he took a step or two forward to the edge of the cliff, and addressing the dusky banana-trees which were rocking their arms about in the blackness of the slope beneath his feet—

“Gentlemen,” said he, “this letter is going to my lady's gallant who is in the mountains with Carrasco. And by that same reason, that she said I held both his life and *her own* between my fingers, this letter should be a summons to him to meet her. That much you may already have divined?”

The banana-trees whispered to each other as the breeze rose up from the sea, then became silent and



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waved their arms slowly, as before from side to side as if they were listening.

“ But, can you guess, perchance, can you guess where the very next message will go ? ”

No, they could not guess. He chuckled triumphantly as though he were looking down upon a vast theatre of puzzled faces.

“ Why, God save us, gentlemen, I did not suppose for a moment that you could. These be things that need logic, perception and no little understanding. But I will keep you no longer in suspense. The next message will be ”—(he paused and waved his arms aloft, leering down the slope in a manner most horrible to behold)—“ for the Guardia Civil.”

And having laughed very shrilly at their surprise, he turned his face once more towards the mountains and trudged forward on his dark journey to the Devil's Kitchen.

CHAPTER XXVII

"A piteous corse, a bloody piteous corse,
Pale, pale as ashes, all bedaub'd in blood,
All in gore-blood."

Romeo and Juliet.

THE Arroyo of Santa Fe, like many other mountain streams in the south of Spain, is a furious raging cataract of yellow foam for six weeks, a series of fetid pools with banks of sand and shingle in between them and a lazy trickle from pool to pool for another six weeks, and during the remainder of the year, a dry, dusty waste, in which booths are pitched, buñuelos are fried by gipsies, and youths alternately pelt each other, play at bull-fights with a pair of cow's horns, or try their skill with the knife by slitting sugar canes in mid air. There are more thefts, more stabs, more insults, and more illicit dealing in the bed of the Arroyo for eight or nine months in the year than all the angry life-blood of the mountains can cleanse in the remaining three or four.

The distant Guadalote is a stately river of the plain and always has more or less water. The Arroyo's course is shorter and steeper. When dry, its bed affords access to the mountains by a slope which, though sudden for water, is easy for men.

The course alters year by year, boulders, tree trunks, and other obstacles brought down by the torrent compelling the traffic to seek the easiest path, and in lazy Santa Fe it is often a subject of curiosity, and even of wagers, as to the trend of the river bed next year. It alters by as much as two hundred good paces, and the track that last summer invaded the hacienda of Don

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José upon the West, this year has torn up the cemetery of the bull-ring horses and invaded the plantation of Don Antonio upon the East.

Early in the morning, shortly before sunrise, two persons rode along the river bed on mules.

The eyes of both these silent travellers were fixed almost constantly upon the mysterious glow to their right in front of them, save when a ridge of juniper-covered rock, a clump of poplars or a pepper tree passed in between. Even the talkative might have been silent, confronted by that growing flush in the Eastern sky which day by day reacts how Cosmos, blushing for his imperfections, appeared before a universe of perfect Night.

In front was Tío Patas, his sombrero drawn over his eyes and his capa around his ears, sniffing the pure air of cold virgin morning, not with any great expansiveness of spirit such as this air calls forth in a man of single mind, but drawing it in with great sighs at frequent intervals, as though he were uneasy.

Behind him rode Carna, in a dress belonging to Susana, a servant's plain black shawl pinned round her face. Thus attired, nobody would have recognized her in the dim light of early morning.

Day broke whilst they were riding through a ravine between two walls of grey rock, and the sun came sloping across country and gilded the upper edge of the left-hand wall with a vivid orange, so that it looked like a tall sheet of battered lead with a golden border.

"This seems the longer way after all," said Carna, presently, drawing nearer to Tío Patas.

"The longer and the shorter, Señora. I grant you it comes somewhat roundabout, but our mules will not weary so soon as if they had climbed the pass, and I

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warrant you we will reach there half an hour earlier than by the other path."

"What is the place called?"

"The Devil's Ninepins."

"Good Patas," said Carna, after riding some yards in silence, "you know full well that my life is in your hands. *That* troubles me not, for I reckon my life as nothing, and besides, I feel that I may trust you."

Her voice belied her words. The old man made a gesture which meant, "*Of course* you may."

"But the life of my lover, that is another thing. And the least carelessness, the least unguarded word, may have caused us to be followed."

She looked behind her instinctively, but saw nothing more than dwarf palm bushes, herbs, rocks and lizards. Nothing was stirring down the long ravine behind them.

"If you cannot trust me," answered Tío Patas, with a sudden oblique look behind him, "'twere a pity to be honest." And he shrugged his shoulders.

"But you *are* honest, good Patas, of that I am very sure."


The poor child looked up at him beseechingly, whereat the old man cackled, and swore by all the saints in heaven that no more honest fellow had ever drawn breath, and why should she be so timorous?

"¡Ea! If you doubt, Señora, let us turn back." He reined round his mule and looked at her indignantly.

"No, no!" said Carna. "Forward!"

And, the old man muttering to himself, they both pushed on.

As they continued thus in silence, Tío Patas threw his sombrero back upon his head and undid his capa. Yet the sunshine was not strong enough to warrant his feeling so hot.



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Any one meeting this strange pair might have noticed in the eyes of the man a look that was full of apprehension, which he seemed conscious of, and tried to stifle whenever Carna drew near to him or spoke to him.

And thus for another hour or more they steadily rode up and up.

The landscape had grown wild and rugged. Above them were forests of cork trees with clearings, grey cliffs, and precipices here and there. On the east these forests were lighted by the sun, and showed a vivid green; on the west they were sombre black.

The long shadows of the eastern hills were slowly descending the slopes and ridges on the west. High up upon the left, and behind the green-clothed hills, rose two bluish mountains, so far that one could not see anything but their colour and their outline and the white snow upon their summits. Once Carna, looking up, saw a black speck overhead. It was an eagle.

At last, turning aside from the river bed, they climbed a hillock, passed through a clump of cork trees, and looked down upon a clearing where nine great boulders were scattered here and there as if a giant had thrown them.

The eyes of Tío Patas were restless, first turning towards one boulder, then towards another. If a man had chosen to hide there, the dwarf palms and undergrowth would have served very well to screen him.

"We must show ourselves," said Tío Patas; "and I think we have got here first."

So saying he dismounted, and, coming towards Carna, assisted her also to dismount. She followed him down into the middle of the clearing.

They waited for fully ten minutes, Carna pacing up

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and down, all trembling, and now and then raising her handkerchief to her eyes, her black shawl thrown back and her mass of silken hair falling round her temples. Her beautiful face was deathly pale.

Tío Patas stood still and surveyed the boulders around him. Presently, as if growing impatient, he clapped his hands. An answering shout was heard on the margin of the forest. Carna's heart leapt within her.

A moment afterwards, Juan, still in his glittering suit of green *majo* with a handkerchief bound round his head and over his left cheek bone and temple, his eyes looking fiercely eager, yet dark with anguish, came bounding down the hillock towards them, as fine a looking man as ever put foot in Santa Fe.

The lines of horror, remorse, and almost of despair, were obliterated for a moment from his features when he sprang towards Carna. He looked so brave, so gallant and reckless, that even Tío Patas paused to glance at him from beneath his restless eyelids, then walked away with a sigh.

And before the lovers could speak, whilst yet they were pressing each other's hands, from behind every boulder rose a Guardia Civil, and covered Juan with his rifle.

Juan first heard Carna scream, then felt her clinging to him, before he caught sight of a captain who ran towards him with drawn sword.

When he looked round him he realized his position. A great horror and loathing came into his eyes; he seized Carna by her two wrists, tore her from him, and with set teeth cast her away from him, loading her with bitter curses.

"You are my prisoner," said the captain.

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"So it would appear," said Juan scornfully, his face ashen white.

"You have slain a captain of the Civil Guard."

"Most true."

"You do not deny it?"

"On the contrary, I freely admit it."

"That simplifies matters."

"Why?"

"I will tell you, after this lady has retired."

He looked towards Carna with a sneer. He was a handsome fellow with a black moustache, and the moustache rose up towards his nose.

"I will not go, I will not go," moaned Carna.

"As you please, Señora," and again he turned to Juan and said to him—

"I have received certain orders. I am a soldier, and those orders must be carried out."

"What are your orders?"

"My orders were, Señor" (here the captain came closer and spoke in his ear) "that you would attempt to escape."

Juan looked at him for a moment without flinching, and understood.

"Show me the spot where I stand to escape," he said bitterly.

"Why, sir, unless you have any preference in the matter, it seems to me you stand admirably where you are."

"You need not keep your men behind me," said Juan, and, taking the bandage from his face, he bound his own ankles together and doubly knotted the linen.

"I thank you," said the captain, "and congratulate you on your coolness. What I have to do I shall do with profound regret."

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He saluted.

Juan folded his arms across his breast ; then, as though with some scornful purpose, folded them behind his back and watched the firing party. The captain motioned to the Civil Guards to range themselves in front of him. They fell in, two deep.

Carna had watched these proceedings with distended eyes and slowly curling lip. At last she comprehended what was about to take place.

"Oh, no ! no !" she cried, springing towards the captain like a madwoman, and hanging on his arm ; "this is some horrible farce—you are pretending."

"You are right, Señora," replied the guardsman with a sneer ; "this is indeed a farce, and very well acted. Faith, you have too pretty a face, though, to screw it in such wrinkles, and all for nothing."

She looked at him wildly, open-mouthed, and shook his arm.

"Absolutely for nothing, Señora," he continued somewhat more impatiently, "since the audience you are acting for will not be here to clap you when the curtain falls."

He beckoned to one of the Civil Guards, who laid down his rifle and came running towards him.

"Help this good lady away," said the captain, "and oblige her by appearing to be very violent."

The Civil Guard took hold of Carna under her right arm. Though speechless, she still clung to the captain.

"¡Caracoles ! You would almost deceive the devil !" cried the captain. And he looked at her wonderingly, as if half doubting whether she were in earnest after all.

Tío Patas came towards them. The captain spoke

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to him. The Civil Guard and Tío Patas between them succeeded in tearing her away.

"Oh, not this, not this!" screamed Carna, trying to struggle back, and writhing and twisting in their grasp.

"As there is a God in Heaven, and a Christ that was crucified, man, if you be born of woman, will you shoot him before my very eyes?"

"That is precisely what I am so averse to doing, Señora, and for that reason I wish you to withdraw."

"Hold!" cried Juan.

They all looked at him.

"Decoy! strumpet! murderess! This farce is all in vain, for it does not deceive me. Go in silence and hide thyself in hell! What dark agent first bade thee ensnare me in thy bedchamber I do not know, and half believed thee guiltless, but now I know thee for the dead man's paramour."

"¡Ay!" cried Carna, "he does not believe me."

"Believe *what*, Señora?" asked the captain with a puzzled frown.

"Who told you that we would meet each other here?"

"Your servant, Señora."

And the captain pointed to Tío Patas, whose face was almost buried in his breast.

It was then that Carna, raising her arms aloft, gave such a thrilling scream that the squad of Civil Guards shuddered where they rested on their rifles. The scream came echoing back from the ridges above them and around them, and birds flew twittering up from the foliage, bewildered at the sound.

"Move her, at least, out of the line of fire," said the captain; then turning to the firing party,—

"¡Firmes!"

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Tío Patas and the guardsman dragged Carna struggling away. All the bank notes in his pocket the old man had forgotten, his forehead was covered with sweat.

“ ¡ Apunten ! ”

Eight rifles covered Juan, who waved his right hand and laughed hoarsely, crying, “ The journey pleases me, Señores ; your world smells very foul ! ”

“ ¡ Fuego ! ”

As the smoke rose from in front of them the Civil Guards saw Juan lurch back, then fall forward like a log among the wild thyme.

Two bullets had traversed his skull, and one was in his heart.

Two men stood beside a boulder round which they had attempted to drag the poor witness of this scene. With frenzied power she strained forward, as though she would break the slender wrists by which they held her. When they loosed her towards the corpse she fell upon her knees crying, “ Take him my rosary—it has a black cross of ebony; my mother and I have kissed it many a time. Let him swear to me ! Let him swear ! For that was the Eve of Saint John, and now it has come again.”

She had lost her reason.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"Accursed be the bitterness of my sinne, for whiche
Ther must be suffered so moche bitterness."

*The Persones Tale.*¹

OUTSIDE the little *Fonda del Trini*, beyond Cinco Caminos, an expectant group of idlers were awaiting the diligence. The schoolmaster was there, seated upon a stone, with his hat between his knees to catch the tobacco dust from a cigarette which he rolled between his fingers. He put his head first on one side, then upon the other, as he adjusted each end of the cigarette and closed the paper inwards.

Three or four fishermen stood round the schoolmaster with their brown hands behind their backs and the red sun just catching their foreheads as it dipped behind the wall and sank into the sea.

Far along the dusty thirsty road, two black specks showed where a patrol of Guardia Civil were pacing slowly towards the Guadalote, their white pugarees showing like snowflakes in the red light of a cottage window, their rifles, like two black pins, swaying from side to side in measured pace.

The discussion had been animated, and several pairs of eyes bent upon the distant patrol showed that the Guardia Civil had something to do with it.

The village priest was there, and even the barber.

¹ From which several phrases in this chapter are derived.

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For when the gossips will not come to the barber, the barber must go to the gossips, even though the silent go unshaven. Outside the group some dozen children were sucking eleven fingers and one piece of sugar cane, all very dirty, the sugar cane dirtiest of all. These children were listening open-eyed to the discussion of a dire event. On the opposite side of the way, two Jesuit novices were quietly awaiting the diligence, and the idlers, putting two and two together, had already guessed that they were there to meet the Father Rector.

Presently, those who continued staring along the road saw a cloudy appearance in the far distance; then the two black specks separated, one on each side of the highway; next they became enveloped in an advancing storm of dust, and this storm, coming rapidly nearer, was seen to contain a diligence and nine mules whose bells were already growing louder.

Day had changed to night in the few minutes that elapsed between its leaving the Guadalupe and its drawing up outside the *Fonda del Trini*.

"It is just eight years ago this month," thought Padre Ignacio to himself, as the novices bent over his hand and raised it to their lips, "since I lifted down my own baggage into the *Fonda*, lonely and forlorn, suspected of all people in Santa Fe, but trusted by our great Company with a scheme of no small account."

Then, turning towards the bystanders, he said—

"Good evening, friends; may you remain with God."

He bowed to them, and smiled. The two novices shouldered his baggage as the people returned his greeting.

"Eight years ago!" mused the Rector, turning away. "What changes have come since then! 'Suspected of Santa Fe, but trusted by our Company,' said I? That

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also has changed. Yet I cannot but remember that eight years ago they entrusted me with a scheme of no small account, which, by God's help and not my own intelligence, I carried through. Therefore, why should I resent their giving the whole thanks to God? And even if I did it, to have done a thing—is to have done it, nothing more. Where now lies the architect who fashioned yon cathedral?"

As they turned to go up the hill three small children ran after the Father Rector to press their sticky little lips upon his hand.

These were the younger children, and, when they came back, the older ones, who had followed the late discussion and formed conclusions, cuffed their ears for "Judases and Jesuits." Then three booing voices toddled away on six brown legs to ask their mothers what was "Ju-ju-ju-das."

Climbing the hill, Padre Ignacio questioned the novices as to the welfare of the college.

"All was well," they said.

But once or twice they glanced at each other furtively. The Father Rector was too buried in his own thoughts to notice it.

He had already changed his clothes and begun his meal when Padre Martinez bowed to him and welcomed him. The eyes of the superior had a something indefinable when they met the black eyes of the lieutenant. It was not resentment, not even reproach, but rather a forbearance of the weary soul which says, "Though I know thee for a traitor, come, let us live in peace."

The other, if he understood this patient look, was not in a cool enough mood to dwell upon it. His eager black eyes were never so restless in their sockets as to-night.



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For a while the two priests conversed upon commonplace matters, and the Rector, half rising from his chair, poured out a glass of wine and gently pushed it towards Padre Martinez, then filled another for himself.

Then he fell back into his chair with a quiet sigh, and hearing the distant thrill of the organ, said with a smile, "Vespers! I should like to say a few words to the college before they leave the chapel."

"They will expect it," said Padre Martinez, "for it is your custom, upon your return, to do so."

"Not that I have anything particular to say," continued the Rector, becoming abstracted, and half turning his head to look out upon the orchard whence rose the well-known perfume of orange blossoms borne from the sleeping vega.

"I have something to say to you," interrupted Padre Martinez, after a brief pause.

And as if the generous wine would help him out, he took up the glass and drained it to the bottom. Padre Ignacio turned back to the table with a sigh, and, having moved an easy chair towards the other, busied himself with a silver knife upon his fruit.

"My views upon certain matters," began Padre Martinez, when he had sat down, "though moulded to your own" (the Rector smiled), "are, alas! so irrepresible that they have broken all bonds."

Padre Ignacio bowed, but made no comment. Each knew that this fracture of discipline was countenanced by the Provincial. It would have been idle to discuss the matter, and the Rector scorned to do so.

"It is not, therefore, to be wondered at," continued Padre Martinez, "that after your departure events shaped themselves upon different lines to those they would have followed had you been here. Do not mis-

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take me. I do not imply that my hand has wrought an improvement. I am such a miserable worm, that confidence and pride but ill become me."

"Enough of formalities!" said the other coldly.

Padre Martinez bit his lip.

"To return to my confession——"

"To your *report*. We only confess what we believe to be wrong."

"To my report. For long, as you know yourself, we had wondered who was the prime mover in this agitation."

"And you have found him? Well done!"

"That Fernandez had a hand in it, we knew. Yet he was but one of the less dangerous ringleaders, for at least he was an open enemy, a blundering quick-tongued fool, easily watched and harmless. I, for my part, never suspected Fernandez of filching secrets from us, such as that affair of the Testament with marked passages that came from France—you will remember?"

The Rector made a slight gesture with his hand.

"I told you at the time to whom I attributed it," he said.

"Yes. To the Bishop of Santa Fe. And I ventured to think, as you may remember——"

"That the Bishop was a bigger fool even than Fernandez," interrupted the Rector, almost with a yawn.

"Possibly you were right and I was wrong. Who was it after all?"

"Tell me," said Padre Martinez, "did you not say, Father, that once whilst in Paris you had an audience with——"

The speaker bent forward and whispered a name.

"Yes," replied the Rector, showing some interest;

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"it was my good fortune to carry her a message, and to take one back."

"Would she have cause to write to you?"

"Here in Santa Fe?"

"Aye."

The Rector smiled.

"She would not even remember my name."

"You had received no letters from her, addressed simply to the 'Father Rector,' no cipher despatches, nothing whatever?"

"No," replied the Rector shortly, his eyes fixed wonderingly upon the other's face.

Padre Martinez almost smiled in his incredulity. His face said very plainly, "Why do you keep up this deception? Why should you refuse to let me know?"

"I confess," the Rector continued coldly, "that your suggestions are very strange to me. But no doubt you have good reason. What is the name of the person whom you suspect?"

"Let me ask you," said Padre Martinez. "Were you to know some one person as a socialist, an atheist, and a consorter with our enemies, were you to hear him propose that this college be made a picture gallery, what would you think of his feelings towards the Company?"

"Your problem is not a difficult one to solve," returned the Rector almost scornfully, and wondering what all this preface might portend.

Padre Martinez rose from his chair and took a step or two towards the open balcony.

"Were you to verify his enmity towards us, and to find in his possession an intercepted letter, from the great lady whom I name, addressed 'To the Father

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Rector,' what would you think of his intentions and pursuits ? ”

“ I presume,” said the Rector, “ that very little logic would be required for me to label him a rabid anti-Jesuit.”

“ Such a person,” continued Padre Martinez, advancing into the room again, his hands tightly clasping each other, his merciless eyes full of a cruel triumph, “ has been found. Two days ago he murdered a captain of the Civil Guards, from which you may judge his character. Since yesterday the Civil Guards have been hunting him in the mountains——”

“ Hush ! ”

The Rector raised his hand, looking towards the door, for some one had knocked.

It was a lay brother, who said to the Rector—“ An officer of the Civil Guards is asking for you below.”

“ Go ! ” said the Rector coldly, turning towards Padre Martinez. “ This *dénoûment* for which you have laboured so zealously seems to have come at last. To you belongs the honour of the first fruit. I will speak with you after vespers, for the service is nearly at an end and I am late.”

When the door had closed, the Rector still tarried a few moments, waiting for that pause in the service which comes after the last chant.

And the balmy wind that came in through his orchard brought many memories.

At first his mind dwelt upon this tragedy which seemed to have happened, and although the culprit, whoever he might be, no doubt deserved his punishment, the world seemed so sweetly peaceful this summer's night that he shrank from hearing the worst. Then it occurred to him that perhaps the Civil Guard

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had failed to entrap the man, and had come for some further clue, or to bring some further report.

At all events, the story was impersonal as yet, possibly the man was unknown to him ; Padre Martinez had not even troubled to name him.

And, leaning out of his balcony and looking towards the right, he could just see the coloured light from a window of the chapel. Presently the chant arose once more. The return to the college and to old associations, combining with the influence of scents and music, carried his thoughts away from these sordid things, this battling with mean foes.

The distant vega sent him old memories gently wafted through the orchard down below, and the breeze that played with his white curls whispered of a young priest who used to kneel beside the oak panels of the organ loft in the college at Ghent, who used to spend whole nights beside his casement upon his knees, overcome by spiritual emotion.

Alas ! The soaring spirit of those days, how little had it attained ! All these dead years and hopes, to what had they brought him ?

Then arose a later picture. The zealous priest, chosen to prepare the way and to make the paths straight. His remorse, so quickly swallowed up in that flood of weak human gloating upon his son. And then the returning of his son, the dreadful announcement ! Had some cruel fate decreed that this picture, with time, should grow blacker ? No, the climax had been reached. Surely the punishment had been consummated ! Yet —still they were lost in a dark forest. But whilst there was life there was hope. How many were there who had passed through this valley of the shadow of death ! Where was his son to-night ? Why was his dear face

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not here to welcome him? Had he not written to Juan, announcing his return?

This vexed him, and, as he lifted aside the baize curtain of the chapel and bowed and crossed himself, he was lost in thought—so lost in thought that he had not caught the respectful “Good evening, Father!” of a Civil Guard, who stood in the shadow of the door to arrest his progress.

Something (whether the turning of many faces to the door behind him, or the sound of spurred heels upon the marble) awakened the Rector from his abstraction and caused him, already half-way up the chapel, to look round. In the doorway he saw the motionless figure of a Civil Guard who was standing with his three-peaked cap in one hand and a piece of paper in the other. Already he had knelt and crossed himself upon coming in sight of the crucifix, and remained at the entrance, as though unwilling to intrude. He was holding the red baize curtains aside with his arms, and the glow of the altar candles fell upon his white and red facings, sparkling upon the golden braid and sword-hilt.

Hesitating at first, the Rector seemed to be drawn towards this strange visitor, and as he turned back the guardsman came to meet him.

From the gloved hand of the soldier the Rector took a letter, stained with a terrible crimson round the margin of a bullet hole which had effaced the signature. With it was an open envelope, and both envelope and letter bore a golden fleur-de-lys.

“This,” said the guardsman in an undertone, “was taken from the corpse of Don Juan Nieto, who was shot whilst attempting to escape from us, soon after sunrise. It is addressed ‘To the Father Rector of the College.’”

* * * * *



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A lurid vision, rapid as the flight of a passing bat that crossed the chapel at that moment, seared itself into the Rector's very brain. Each object, each sound, each colour in the scene seemed to him as vivid—aye, far *more* vivid—than they had been in reality many years ago.

Across the valley of Guipúzcoa the goat bells were ringing once again, the church bells proclaimed the angelus, and the shepherds' voices went echoing up the hillside and into the woods.

Once more he was in the woodcutter's cottage in the forest, by the elfish glow of the open hearth, with the shadows of herbs and hams dancing upon the rafters, but this time as an onlooker.

And he saw a caressing hand that closed upon a letter in the young priest's bosom, that drew it forth and cast it into the shadows.

Next, he stood beside a death-bed. With tortured spirit he looked upon the passing of Teresa, saw the village priest come in with the Last Sacrament, heard the death-rattle, knew that she had left behind her a casket.

His eyes pierced the lid of the casket. He saw what it contained.

Three times the Rector tried to begin his homily, but not until the third time could a single word be forced from those ashen lips.

His left hand was pressed against his heart. With his right hand he leant against the stonework of the pulpit.

At first he had turned the leaves of a book aimlessly to left and right, looking down at the upturned faces in the dusk as though he were looking through the

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ground and through the earth, beholding the torturing fires that burned in Hell.

At first his words were wholly indistinguishable; then, gradually, they took form, and by some fierce exertion of the Rector's proud will upon the sluggish tongue that for a while had refused obedience, his sermon was heard by every one there assembled, even by the Civil Guard, whom Padre Martinez had motioned to a seat beneath the pulpit.

As the speaker went on, his delivery, though always obeying the same relentless artificial force, without which it had altogether faltered, grew so clear and impressive as to hold his listeners spellbound. There was a something awful in the Rector's voice; there was a presage of calamity in the very air.

He had to tell them of a young man, a youth who denied his Master thrice before the cock crew twice, then, trying to render holy a mind which was foul of nature, contrived to be received into the Company of Jesus, believing, either in his vanity or in the twisted intelligence that Satan had put into him, that a wretched infidel can be made into a model of piety.

This youth mistook emotion for belief, and a love of shape and colour for a love of holiness. In reality his soul was inaccessible to anything but lust, for his soul was of the flesh.

And one day, walking through the woods upon an errand, this novice looked a woman in the eyes. A humble and helpless girl, born and nurtured in the wilderness, ignorant of the devil and all his ways, little dreaming that one of Satan's ministers stood there before her.

Surely, the priest that is capable of deadly sin is like an angel of darkness disguised as an angel of light, in

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which apparel, God help those who meet with him. Had this young Jesuit but followed the fundamental precepts of his order, that same day he must have confessed his lust. Yet, *did* he?

No; so lovely was sin in his eyes that he dreaded the result of his confession. He foresaw that he would be saved from his own vile impulses, and he wilfully eluded the common precautions that must ever be observed, to detect and rescue the roguish flesh.

It was his daily task to bring in the correspondence, a post of great trust in those troublous days, and how did he perform it?

Tarrying one night in the cottage with this young girl, she took from his bosom, unknown to him, the most important secret letter with which he had ever been entrusted. Deeming it a love message—for, truly, her own knowledge of his lustful nature taught her how to appraise him—she hid it away. Even when she learned that it was an important despatch, like some poor magpie, she still concealed it, hoping that its secret might some day be of service, might have a selling price. And so, no doubt, it had.

The despatch was sought in vain, the forest was scoured by night with lighted torches, and even the next day. In vain!

In due time there happened—what was sure to happen from the first! Aye! From the first moment that he failed to confess himself, for the hidden sin had destroyed his conscience. What think ye of a man that has a dangerous wound in his body? Does he not hasten to cleanse and dress it? Or does he leave his wound to corrupt and fester, so hastening on his death? So is it with confession.

This young man committed the most horrible crime,

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the most shameless theft that a sinner can commit. He stole a woman's chastity, which is a theft of body and of soul.

What then ? Did he not yet confess ?

Oh no. Though confession now seemed necessary, the shame of it was too great. Though he that has done the sin should have the shame of the confession.

A child was born, a child of sin, foredoomed (poor innocent !) to pay an awful penalty !

What course did our novice now pursue ?

"Stay, that I may tell you more of him. Then you may foretell his actions.

"He was *disobedient*, for he ignored the commands of the Most High.

"He was *presumptuous*, for he had undertaken a task for which he was ill equipped.

"He was *obstinate*, for he defended his sinful folly, and trusted too much in his own wit.

"He was *selfish*, holding his own delight of more importance than the injury of his fellows.

"He was *hypocritical*, for he feared to show himself such as he was, and therefore showed himself such as he was not.

"He was *vainglorious*, for he loved pomp of decorations and of ceremonies, delighting in temporal highness.

"Lastly, he was cursed with *pride*, which is the root of all deadly sin. For as the devil fell by pride, so he assaults virtue in us principally by that temptation. This young novice had read his lives of the saints, and amongst other passages, this :—'Antony, I will always protect thee, and will render thy name famous throughout the earth.'

"Oh, mockery of mockeries ! Not only did saintly

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teachings turn to foul purpose and lend themselves to pride in this poor sinner, but the very saint who above all others proved most unassailable to lewd temptations was the one whose example was perverted to evil ends. Any other person would have been convinced, at his own downfall, that he was unfit to become a priest. *Pride* told our novice otherwise, bade him avoid all shame, and aspire to all greatness and repute, like the selfish vainglorious hypocrite that he was! He conspired that his own brother should take this woman away, allowing people to think that the child was his—the brother's. Thus hoped our wicked novice to escape the chastisement of his own crime; but, mark my words, *in that moment he doubled the blackness of his foul sin.*"

When the Rector, pressing with both hands tightly upon his side, reached this point of his story, all eyes were bent wonderingly upon him. The speaker's lips were parched, his face wore a deathly pallor. The light from the one candle in the pulpit seemed to fall on a living corpse.

His listeners felt spellbound with curiosity, for they realized that the Rector must have witnessed some portion of the tragedy he spoke about so feelingly. The organist, uncertain at first whether his services would be needed, had come to the edge of the gallery, and leaning on the wooden rail, was gazing down earnestly at him.

There were even those who felt that some tie existed between the Rector and this unknown culprit.

Padre Ignacio drank water from a glass beside him and continued hoarsely, and in a voice whose failing strength yet held some strain of sympathy—

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"And now commenced some fifteen years of bitter tribulation, of want, of misery and degradation—of shame, chastisement, hunger, poverty, rags, beggary, hopelessness !

"Ha ! You seem to look approvingly ! 'This man,' you would say, 'at least had his reward.'

"Nay ! This hard lot I speak about was not for the offender, but for his victim ; not for the man, but for the woman, and for her helpless offspring.

"The brother, after a twelvemonth, wearied of her. She bore him her second child. Then he cast her off. Her bones lie yonder in the cemetery. They were carried there in the pauper's coffin and shot into a pit."

The Rector raised his arm and pointed in the direction of the little graveyard of Cinco Caminos.

The chapel might have been empty, it was so void of sound. A great breathless hush had come over them all ; they felt that this unclean history was coming nearer.

"In time, the criminal heard of this bitter history. But he had grown respected and well thought upon. He held his head high, and was raised to a post of trust in our great fraternity.

"At last he encountered his son, grown into a youth, and, yielding to some remnant of good promptings, he undertook his education. Yet, even in this, the innate weakness of the priest could not be altogether hidden. Instead of labouring only for the child's good, he would sit musing and gloating for hours upon his kinship to him. Bereft by his sacred calling of the right to call himself 'father,' he nevertheless was filled with fleshly delight whenever he looked upon his son.

"Now the priest's brother, on his death bed, believing that this false priest had deceived him

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as to which child was his own—all who met him thus suspected him of evil—left all his wealth to the child that in reality was the priest's. Endowed with some wealth, the priest's son set out upon his travels to complete his education. And what was the first lesson that he mastered?

"*He became an infidel!* No more, no less!

"On his return he opened the eyes of the reprobate, his father, to the fact that he also had been an infidel from the first, an infidel in heart, but not avowed.

"In the priest's absence, a few weeks later, his son, with the odour of atheism, and mistaken—as fate would have it—for a Socialist and Iconoclast, was found with the long-lost letter upon him, left him by his mother in a casket. This sealed his fate. He was thought to have intercepted the despatches of our Company. Powerful influences were cast in the scale against him. Three nights ago he murdered a captain of Civil Guards.

"This morning, soon after sunrise, he was shot."

At this point there were several among the congregation who noticed that the Rector's face had become even yet more pallid, his eyes dilated as with some awful vision that seemed to have frozen his very brain.

The last words he had spoken almost in a whisper, yet so piercing and so terribly distinct that not one person present had lost its meaning.

He now came down from the pulpit, and kneeling with the altar to his right hand, so that the glare of the candles fell upon his white face and black robes, he raised something in his hand towards the crucifix.

"This," cried he in an awful voice, "is the letter! I am that false priest."

Only for a moment did he hold the letter above his head, for, his fingers relaxing, it fluttered from his

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grasp. Then, with his arms outstretched, the Rector fell forward upon his face.

The Christ, with His array of bright candles to right and left, looked pityingly down upon the prostrate form below for a few moments before any one could shake off the stupefaction that pervaded the very air. Then, one of the priests, a physician, sprang to the Rector's side, and, together with the Civil Guard, bent over him, turning him round and placing his hand upon his heart.

Padre Martinez came slowly forward, and said something with his pale lips, whereat the other Jesuit shook his head.

Then Padre Martinez, seeing that many of the Jesuits had risen, murmuring with wonder, and were moving from their places, waved them back, crying, in a voice which had a new ring of full authority—

“Let there be no disorder in this place! May the Holy Mother of Christ have mercy upon the soul of this unhappy man! Let the organ play, and let the choir sing a solemn requiem.”

The last faint streak of red had melted from the sky when this requiem rose swelling from the chapel, and, trembling in mid air, was met by *Las Ánimas*, which came booming across from the cathedral of Santa Fe, calling to the dark vega, “Pray! Pray for the soul of Ignacio!”

THE END.





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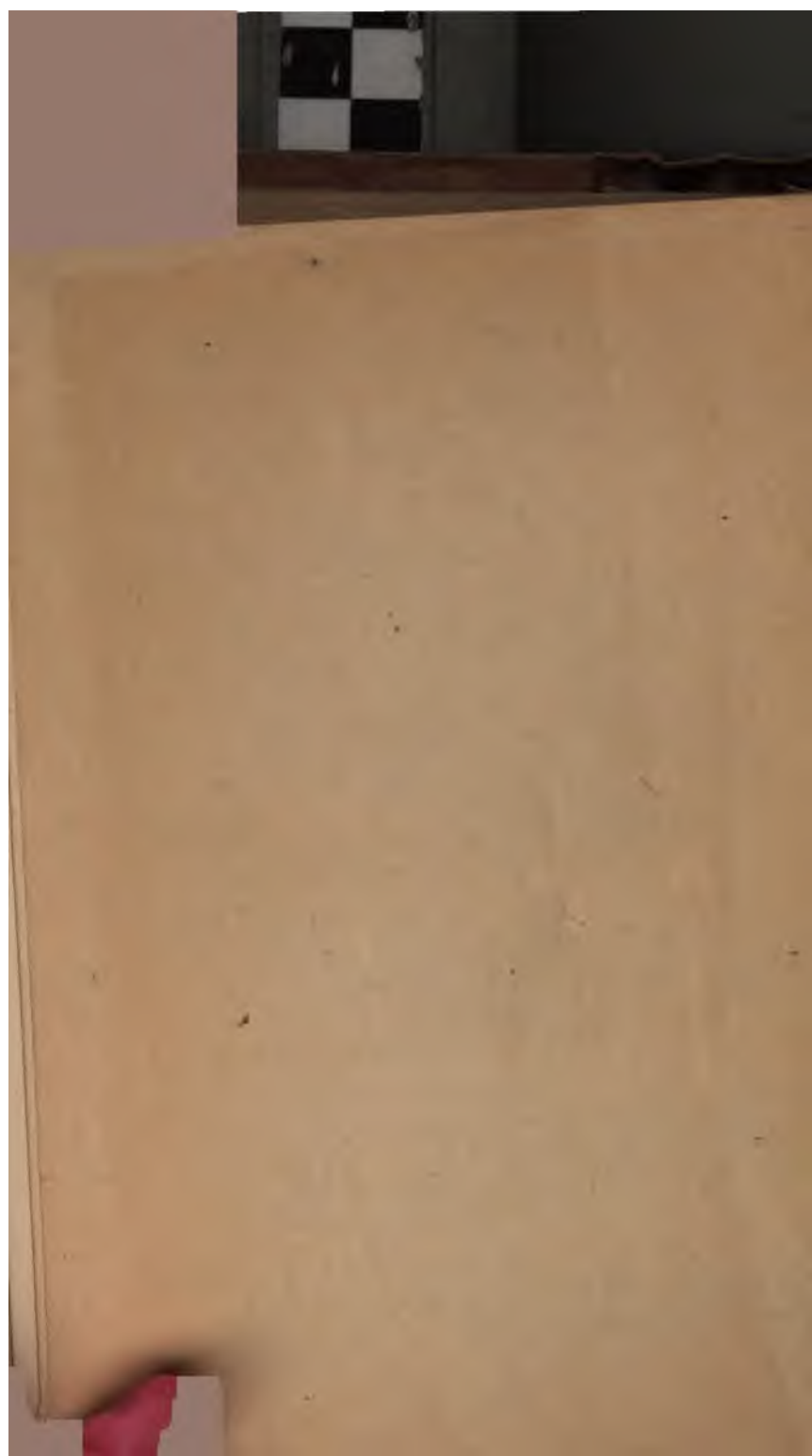
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